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A WELCOME AT THE CABIN DOOR, IN THE VALLEY

The Happy Pilgrimage

BY

CORRA HARRIS

Author of 'My Book and Heart,' 'As a Woman Thinks,' 'Flapper Anne,' etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO

CALIFORNIA

WITH A GRIN FOR MY CRITICS

AND

A HEARTFUL OF

LOVE AND ADMIRATION

FOR

EVERYBODY ELSE IN THE STATE

ILLUSTRATIONS

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Photograph by Amelia M. Watson

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Photograph by Evansmith, Hollywood, California

THE HAPPY PILGRIMAGE

THE HAPPY PILGRIMAGE

I

I HAVE no idea what kind of story this will be, beyond the fact that it will not be a masterpiece, and will lack all the petit-point characteristics of that kind of literature. It shall be easily read and easily forgotten, like a song that goes and comes again in memory. I think the reason we love life for itself is because it is not a masterpiece, but something we can adjust to what we really are without considering the rules of art or rhetoric. What I shall write will be a record of experiences not too great or profound to be beyond the wisdom of the humblest man or woman.

A masterpiece, in my opinion, is only a good thing if a master in living writes it, but if he is a little fellow, it is his size. The masterliness of the performance consists in that — the perfect fit to the dinginess, the ugliness, and the petit-point meanness of his own imagination.

Consider, for example, the first chapter of 'Babbitt,' a lately popular novel. It bears all the earmarks of a masterpiece of literature, but it depicts one of the grossest, most disgusting scenes in everyday life — a pudgy, snorting, bald-headed man waking up early in the morning, blowing his nose, going through the whole process of bathing, shaving, and dressing for the day. The author does not even spare the reader the sight of the steaming wilted towels his hero leaves on the bathroom floor. He belongs to the B.V.D. school

of modern fiction which makes a fine literary art of dramatizing all those incidents in nature that we perform, but of which we do not speak in polite society. They are sophisticated literalists interpreting only the mental and animal life of men — really plagiarists, if you want to know the truth, of the same kind of stuff written in the mediæval period with more vivacity and less malicious effort.

We are producing the same kind of material from which elder romancers like Walter Scott created their heroes and heroines, but a glory and a glamour has faded from the minds of men. Gerald Chapman has been substituted for Robin Hood. We are no longer related to life as the bead is to the wine. We are the transient reporters of ugly hours in living. A thousand men and women of our times write more brilliantly than the elder novelists did — in vain. They and their works perish quickly because they lack the verity and richness of the human heart to interpret life. They are not wise nor brave, only intelligent. They no longer believe the best about men and women, and show a new kind of genius for portraying the worst, without calling it by that name. They cannot interpret the loveliness of love, because for them love has fallen. They tell it shamefully for others to read, as dissolute priests of the sixteenth century taught yokels a creed to recite that made fools of them before the Lord. They are primitives in literature striking at life with the cloven hoofs of a primordial imagination. They do not know that it still takes the noblest thinking to interpret the meanest man. They do not realize that brains badly cultured make no records to glorify what men really are, in spite of everything; that it is idealism, love, the

blood-vividness of some kind of courage, honest faith, which produce the fadeless colors of human life in the written word.

It is with the gravest trepidation that I lay the scenes of my latest adventures where so many of these smarter people have lately gone before me teaching and preaching their doctrines. The shadows of their minds are bound to fall upon me. In fact, I now believe they had already dimmed my sight before I started upon these travels. But the halcyon period of my memories has passed, and I have written so many of them into the Circuit Rider stories, to avoid the hysteria of suppressed spiritual instincts, that the readers of these tales already know how many times I have made an end of one existence and started upon another without the prefix of death to account for the next one. There was never any change of scenes, always living my days over according to a change of circumstances, always bobbing up in the next volume accompanied by the same old Scriptures and the same honorable perversity of a woman determined to grow old and die in just her virtues.

This is the point — if you go on thinking one way and the world in which you live starts thinking like a house-a-fire in the opposite direction, it is time to sit up, take notice, and do a little revising of your personal copy, or die in the debit column of human souls. If you are teetotally out of drawing with your times, something is wrong. No one can be that much nearer right than the majority. The atrophy of even a good character is not commendable. You can make a comedy of your virtues which is as ridiculous as any other comedy of errors.

You understand, of course, that I am only writing out the ultimate conclusions that started me off on these adventures. The process by which I reached them was devious and incoherent, as you will see from the record that follows. They are confused and contradictory like all the thinking we do before we copy it down according to the rules of the best writers and speakers. In this connection I may as well face the charge sometimes made against me by critics — that I am not 'cogent.' I am accused of stopping in the midst of a narrative paragraph to interpolate several pages of reflections, extraneous matter that interferes with the flow of the narrative. It is a fact. I do that frequently. I am probably writing the tale just to get the chance to do it. It is only where you write fiction, make up your heroine and hero, predict beforehand precisely what they will do, that you can keep them busy doing, according to the literary rules of cogency. In real life there is no such thing. You do a deed, dramatize your love affair, or commit a crime. Then you sit down and talk to yourself by thinking about what you have done, or about something else suggested by it. What you think is nearly always more interesting than the measly little thing you accomplished: that is, to any intelligent reader; not a lazy one who wants to jump up on the horse behind your hero and ride at a gallop through the tale. That sort of thing is hard on the author. He becomes no more than the slave of his play-boy reader, writing a merry-go-round to hold his attention and keep him from falling off.

Besides, if a famous novelist belonging to the B.V.D. school of fiction can spend a thousand words telling how a cat looks behind with his tail up begging for

breakfast, and the good-for-nothing hero stands around merely wondering if his bowels will move that morning, it does seem to me that a pleasant old person like this writer might enjoy the privilege of pointing up an ordinary decent little scene by rising above it with a few lofty reflections. Cogency can be a dreadful thing if you keep on being cogent when you should be decently silent.

Some critics of my work have also been unreasonable enough to complain of the tiresome similarity between the lives I have lived and published. As a matter of fact the lives of all men and women are singularly alike, viewed from the inside. The considerable library of letters contributed to me by the readers of the Circuit Rider stories prove that they do not write to praise the tale. They must know that it is poor stuff considered from the literary point of view, but from every walk of life they have written to tell me how they have felt, thought, suffered, bled and died, as many times as I have with precisely the same hopes, defeats, and aspirations. And they are comforted to discover that their own lives bear such a striking family resemblance to mine. This is sometimes a trifle embarrassing, if you know what I mean, but it is a fact that I do recognize a sort of third-cousin kinship to the best of them and a strong anti-family likeness to the worst of them.

Let any honest man with sufficient bravado publish, not a mere confession, but the very truth of his secret heart, and he will be confounded at the cosmopolitan cloud of witnesses he raises who will confirm the record. We are all vain repetitions of each other, playing our rôles in different scenes and under different circumstances.

An egotist is a person with an inward sense of inferiority that frequently leads him to omit his own personal pronoun and hide behind the smallest numeral noun known to man. He will say, 'one thinks' thus and so. This has the appearance of modesty, but modesty is one of those dimmer doubtful virtues that springs oftener than we realize from cowardice, or a sly effort to get the underhold in the argument without betraying his identity by literally endorsing what 'one thinks.'

I have sometimes been faintly annoyed by such people. They resent as brazen even the printed photograph of my own heroine pronoun. But imagine beginning an anonymous record of yourself as, 'one' was born on such and such a date, or 'she' was born, by way of indicating your gender! This is an affectation that would remove you at once from an intimate relationship to your reader. I have no such finicky feelings toward mine. My business and only worth as a writer is to stick as close to him as the ticking of his own heart. When I use my old gray-headed, plain-faced personal pronoun, I give it a gallant stride across the page. I endeavor to enliven it with the wit, wisdom, tenderness, and courage those other people have who never publish theirs — all relatives of mine!

Now and then one of them draws back shocked and writes to tell me that she never had any such views or feeling. I do not reply, but take a grinning satisfaction in the fact that she recognized them when she saw them on the printed page. In any case, what I have said that she denies is the truth for somebody. I am by that as the 'Saturday Evening Post' is about some of the copy it publishes — not nearly all of it is for the

AVENUE LEADING TO THE RUCKER MANSION
The homestead of the family of Corra Harris's father at Ruckersville, Georgia

delectation of the intellectual grandees, nor for those readers who mistake the excelsior of mere words for inspirational stuff, dull people as a rule troubled with an insatiable greed for 'the worth while.' But many of the best stories in it are for the diversion of ordinary human beings, not so very smart, and never griped by either their minds or their morals. Just so I sometimes put in a sentence portrait of myself to please homely women, or I drop the tear of one of my own thoughts to comfort one who grieves, or I say something to interpret the meanest little good woman I might, could, or have been by way of giving tongue to a great many men and women who would like to do the same thing — but never ceasing to pray for a moment of loftier inspiration in which to tell something noble about myself on behalf of those dumb great ones whom we always have with us. In short, it is not actually reprehensible to use your personal pronoun if you know how to use it, and it all comes to this: No man or woman is justified in writing a book, autobiographical or otherwise, if he cannot cast some kind of friendly light upon the vast adventure of living in this world. But if he can discuss the evils of it with good-tempered wit, give credit where credit is due, even if he has no merit in himself — if he can predict happiness and prove that we move as usual toward some 'far-off divine event,' he is justified.

We are all migratory by nature; never domesticated except by circumstances or necessity. Even then we keep our traveling minds. The poorest man, who cannot escape for one day from his labor, plans a trip now and then. The weariest woman thinks she will go away

somewhere after a while and take a long rest. But neither one of them ever goes. The only rest or change they get until after the funeral is this wing motion of their thoughts. I have gone on many a long journey in my imagination and made stop-overs in half a dozen foreign countries between dark and bedtime, especially after a hard day's work. But the next morning I was always at my desk as usual, copying the wings and tail feathers of an idea. My belief now is that I should have spent the remainder of my life in this Valley, without going out of it for more than a few days occasionally, if Nature had not staged one of her little private tragedies by which she so frequently destroys a man or makes him over without taking him into her confidence beforehand.

During the year 1924 I wrote three serials and passed through a severe drought on the farm here without being entirely defeated by either the editors or the weather. I should have been in good heart as usual, having always enjoyed a sort of vehemence in living no matter how hard the going was. But by the end of that year I was out of conceit with myself. I began to feel pathetic inside, where we all really live. It is a strictly human sensation accompanied by tears and has nothing to do with your obvious fortune or misfortunes — the mood a woman is in when her husband asks her, 'What is the matter?' and she tells him 'Nothing,' in a sad, accusatory tone which convicts him of some kind of occult guilt in spite of the fact that he knows himself to be reasonably innocent. But when you have neither husband nor family to sacrifice upon the altar of your grief, it is difficult to react into your normal self.

My feet hurt me sometimes when I have been for a long tramp through the fields, but never in my life have I known what it is to be tired mentally. For nearly thirty years I have put in from ten to fifteen hours a day at my desk and have finished up with the animation of one who has been on the wing all day. But that winter, every time I sat down to work mere facts stuck to the end of my pen. It was as if the adder of the commonplace had stung me. I suffered from the virus of those literalists whose veracity can take the pigment out of the loveliest truth.

I have no artistic instincts. I am incapable of that elegant, cold-hearted thinking out of which the finest literature comes. I could never paint a landscape with the pigment of mere words, but I have what may be called a sanguine temperament toward nature and receive my best inspirations from scenes in the open, to be sketched into copy with any words that pop up, as one uses symbols to convey unspeakable meanings. Or maybe I got a lift from reading the will of God in the wind. I have been caught up in it many a time, like a funny old disheveled Elijah in petticoats, thinking about how it comes and goes in changing moods, but the same one that blew in the Beginning. I am not criticizing the author of Genesis, you understand; a writer who has held the interest and baffled the speculations of scientists and theologians for thousands of years is the greatest chronicler of natural phenomena known to man. Still, if I had written that book I should have put in something historically convincing about the wind that must have blown the elements of creation together, and been the great scene-shifter of that period. What a blast that first one must have

been that divided the waters from the waters, with these continents of dry land showing up age after age between! The earth splitting and the mountains bubbling high from the fierce heat below furnished the features and gave the earth its varied countenance, but I am telling you that the wind and weather had a sight more to do with setting things in order.

There is no science in such ideas, but a fool has as much right to exercise his imagination as a scientist. I am merely explaining the process of intoxication I have practiced as a writer, tanked up on the glory of God; never doing any thinking of my own; always getting inspiration from one source or another on the outside; borrowing my own thoughts from every man, the wind, Moses and the prophets; setting love, hope, faith down to such a tune, helter-skelter, and calling it a 'book.' And invariably I 'got by' with it, for no reason that I can think of, unless it is that many people prefer to have their aspirations doled out to them in some kind of literary powders, and their emotions recited to them in the golden words of another person, rather than hunt the wind and the stars for the cue to themselves.

It is a breath-taking business, and I was no longer equal to making the ascent. For the first time in my life I was sane and sober as a judge. What I mean is that I was very dull, incapable of imagining the brighter garments of truth. My vocation and higher life in the written word had been taken away from me.

Day after day I sat down to my desk, and remained there inarticulate like the chief mourner at a funeral. I always keep the titles of a few short stories on hand like seeds in a flower pot. I tried to bring up one with

the singing romance of innocent young love. Nothing doing! The facts of modern life had me by the heel. I realized that love is no longer a little boy Cupid, but an arrogant, sophisticated young adventuress who takes her lovers as any other game is taken. Six months earlier no one could have taught me such diminishing information about love and lovers! Then I tried out another story entitled 'The Multiple Man.' The conception I had was of an ordinary man who can frequently produce half a dozen manifestations of himself in the community where he lives, some good, others bad, and still show up in the climax like the scared young veteran of his transgression ripened into an admirable character. The world is full of such men, but as a rule they develop more moral courage and strength than the perennial good ones. But no sooner did I have this one going both ways than it was time to call the police, which is a scandal I have never come upon before in my own creative work. He was totally unsuited to the flights of noble thought I always make in the interest of the meanest character I undertake to portray. After days of scribbling I could not mix the best with the worst of this man into a savory hero. Every time I drew the scratch of a pen on him he darkened into more and more of a blackguard. He had a vocative moral conscience, purely ornamental; his very virtues were predatory, if you can imagine such a thing, and he retained a light and joyful gift for rascality, no power of secret repentance in him which affords the writer I have always been the best opportunities of interpretation. I could never get beyond the damnable deeds he accomplished. He had no 'better moments.' Otherwise he was an engaging young man,

thoroughly equipped with brains, romantic raptures, and an industrious disposition for producing copy for his outraged creator. I had him by the scruff of the neck and could do nothing with him peculiar to my own way of thinking. I tore him to pieces, plucked out the vices an abler man might have changed into some kind of back-handed virtues, only to have him cut the wisdom tooth of still more entrancing wickedness.

This story was also abandoned. And I sat back mystified at my own performance. I was embarrassed. How had a woman who had used her imagination to climb so many ladders to the heavens come by so much circumstantial evidence of evil in the masculine character?

Understand, at this time I did not know of the existence of such writers as Joyce, Anderson, or Lawrence. Vague rumors had reached me of the 'Algonquin Group' in New York as being some kind of centrifugal force in modern literature, but as I never produce that kind, their goings-on did not interest me. If I had been pinned down to expressing an opinion, I should have said these little whirlwind movements prove nothing and rarely ever accomplish anything. They are like the dust spirals the weather publishes when it is about to change. I did not suppose the Algonquin Group was doing anything worse than acquiring a certain amount of harmless publicity by entertaining book reviewers, joining hands, beating their brotherly fists together on the table and shouting, 'Give us liberty or give us death!' — referring, of course, to the censorship of the arts which is not always liberal enough if you have written a doubtful book, or have been seen performing the offices of a hostess

sitting in a bathtub filled with the liquid you serve. These excesses must occur if you are entirely liberated from the shackles of common decency in the production of your arts.

Now I am not actually accusing any body or group of persons, or endeavoring to shift the responsibility of having caught myself writing too many of the primitive traits into the scamp I was about to create, but I am setting down a certain suspicion for what it is worth. Diseases of the mind are and have always been more communicable than those of the body. We are subject to some kind of clairvoyance in this matter. The devil's dance swept like wildfire through all the convents of Europe in an age when there were no morning papers or any other form of rapid transportation to carry the infection. And I merely submit that a perfectly innocent person, living in a remote place, with a good old mind, might contract the malady of modern thought simply by being alive in the world at the time it rages. The Algonquin Group may be the guilty victims of the same circumstances.

About this time Miss Winnie, a good little old spinster of this neighborhood, fell sick unto death. She had never stood very high among us, being negligible and very simple. She had queered herself by the claim she made that she could 'see God' and actually did commune with Him. This is not done now and put her out of drawing with a great many of the more enlightened saints. Personally I do not doubt her testimony, for she was literally pure in heart and could never describe in words the countenance of her Heavenly Father nor repeat a single sentence of the communication she received. If you pressed her at this point, she would

give you a sort of sweetened 'Thou Fool!' look and remain silent.

She never persecuted even sinners for her own righteousness' sake, but she was ever cheerful whisking around in the glory of her faith without making a fuss about it. She was very diligent in small ways of goodness and was always getting her prayers answered so definitely that she could see and feel these answers with her naked fingers when the most intelligent saint among us could not get a literal reply to the most eloquent petition he could offer. She had a life filled with hardships and never was aware of it. The only indulgence she allowed herself was a very small brown pill she took for a 'stitch in her side.' Then, stitch or no stitch, she went on with her duties and spiritual activities that now were leading up to the great invitation to meet her Lord, which we call death.

All at once she became a distinguished person. We went to see her lying there in the front room on her 'company' bed, waiting, her hair skewed up as usual, her little old face resting above the pillow like a very bright withered star. Eyes clear and kind, still seeing God, and taking us in with an occasional curious wise glance, not reproachful nor contentious for her dear doctrines any longer, but somehow leaving us out of her thoughts. She had done doing good to us. She had no more duties to perform, no prayers to pray. Everything was settled except that stitch in her side, which would pass presently.

A few of our wordly minded people, whose religious creed has become little more than a theory of anonymous natural forces, gave in quietly, and Miss Winnie had the superlative distinction of being attended by

them toward the end. My notion is that they came to listen in case she had something revealing to tell at the very last, or maybe they expected to discover some pathological explanation of her faith. This is the reason I want no damnably rational people about me in my final hour. I may have a dim vision of immortal things myself. I might recognize some dear familiar face in the great cloud of witnesses, for all we know, which attends us. And if I happened to betray the confidence of these invisible visitors with no more than a whispered word in my weakness, they would certainly contend that such illusions frequently attend the dissolution of mortal faculties. I have heard them do that, a sort of intellectual blasphemy they commit against the veracity of the dying.

But these rationalists got no such satisfaction out of Miss Winnie. The quality of her mind was not changed. She held on with astonishing wit to her spiritual faculties, and made no hysterical proclamation of her faith, nor sensational revelations of the invisible. Quite conscious and serene, she put herself through, making no more than the motion of her hand as if she clasped another hand not seen. I suppose she had been lifted up for so many years that she experienced no unusual exaltation at this time.

Now I am peculiarly sensitive to the suggestions of great music, the eloquence of courage, or noble events, like death. I have never witnessed the passing of even the humblest man or woman without experiencing a sort of spiritual tremor of astonishment. My scalp prickles as if beholding a miracle, not terrifying but sublime. Mountains rise before me, not of this earth, their tops touching the stars; immeasurable spaces

spread between, and I behold the bland light of ages to come to this man or woman, set free at last from our little furroughs of time. For the briefest moment I seem to know that what we are delivered from by death is time, that all our circumstances, whether for good or evil, are transient events conditioned only upon these little ridges of our days, and that to escape them is to be changed, as the Book says, in the twinkling of an eye. And our corruption does put on incorruption because there is no more material in us which tainting time can work. You can only tell your thoughts, not much of the unspeakably high places you have visited in the spirit, but something like this I have felt a few times in my life seated beside the lowly bed of a sinner or a saint when they would be taking leave of themselves in the flesh. Then the vision faded and I would be as I had been before, the mortal friend of the dead, weary with the night's watching, with all my tomorrows of time between me and that bright knowledge I held for a moment.

Still some courage I have had in living; the best thoughts I have ever copied for others to live bear some faint relation to these stolen inspirations. I get a hunch about what we really are by reading the faces the dead leave behind them, whether we think they die in the Lord or not. However meanly marked they are by the experiences they pass through, they take a look of quietness and dignity. Always, they seem to me accusatory, as if the good they tried to do did not turn out very well on account of the diminishing eyes we kept upon their efforts, as if the evil they knew had been done to them had come upon them from without. And now they show in death a strange innocence of the men

they were in life. I challenge any one to find the look of guilt in a dead man's face, even though he had been a felon. It is a tragedy or an indictment written in lofty sentences. He is shriven and proud at last, and will have no more to do with us, is what it means.

When the news came one morning that Miss Winnie had passed away, I hurried upstairs to a closet where I keep certain things in an old chest. The men and women who die here are usually old people who make the transit in the winter on account of no longer being able to endure that stitch in the side with which so many of them are afflicted in bad weather. There are no flowers in our fields and gardens then, and we are nearly a hundred miles from a florist. So I try to keep something imperishable and appropriate on hand for these emergencies. This time I had two long green palm leaves, artificially preserved, with a sheaf of what might be called undertaker's wheat, tied on them with a bow of lavender ribbon. This piece had really been provided for an excellent old man who had been sick unto death earlier in the winter, but who, contrary to all expectations, had survived his illness.

Now, however, when I opened the box and considered these two glittering green palm leaves sticking up so far above that bunch of bearded wheat, the thing looked too harshly impersonal, like the casually complimentary epitaph friends cast upon the bier of a worthy citizen who will never vote again in this world. A tiny bouquet of 'spring beauties' — those innocent, earliest flowers that bloom like the little sisters of goodness so close to the earth — would be more suitable for Miss Winnie, I felt, returning the box to the chest. Then I thrust a notebook and pencil in my pocket and

started over the hill to the house where she had woven all the bright days and dark days of her years into the fabric of a good little life.

Three months had passed since I had been able to write anything worthy of my soul. Some shadow had fallen upon the high places in my mind, and I had been obliged to cast much copy into the flames for conscience' sake. Here at last, I reflected, was a chance to recover my altitudes in the written word. There are special magazines in this country devoted to the exploiting of the life and deeds of successful men. A baseball hero is almost sure to get his reputation enhanced with an extremely complimentary biography in the daily papers. This stuff is sufficiently important to be syndicated. How was it that they never employed Boswells to record the little lives people like Miss Winnie lived so admirably without ever attaining any worldly success, but which were within the reach of the humblest to emulate whether they could twirl a baseball or not? She had made more home runs in one day probably than the swiftest man we ever had on the diamond. She had kept the Commandments, which is something very few captains of industry or prize-fighters ever do. And she was never in need of going into training to practice her beatitudes. A familiar sweet old pride entered my breast and I stepped with a longer stride. These boastful people who record how they have succeeded in the world never set down how they have failed in other ways. The hired biographers of sporting celebrities could not possibly interpret the singing sweetness of such a character as Miss Winnie's. I had some practice at this business! — and so on and so forth.

Being human we cannot escape the double motive for our best deeds. But it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it may be both a worthy and a profitable motive. I was going to pay a call of condolence on Miss Winnie's bereaved relatives and at the same time obtain by association with her memories a few wing widths of inspiration I had lately lost as a writing interpreter of the humbler classics in living.

I went into the front room where a group of neighbors sat becalmed, heads bowed, as we do here on such occasions. We come in, pay this tribute of silence, and go our ways. I chose a seat just inside the door with my own eyes reverently lowered. But I was aware of the bed in the corner where Miss Winnie had lain so long. It was empty, puffed up, smoothed, and covered with a white spread the way she always kept her company bed. There were two very small dim smears of sunlight on the floor cast through the thin curtains of the window. My mind caught at them as curiously appropriate to Miss Winnie. I was seeing the long bright trail of her footsteps through the years and over this last mountain top — mixing Scriptures as usual with my own fancy, you understand — when some one brushed past me into the room. I heard a sob and a thin, tearful voice exclaim, 'Don't you think she looks natural!'

I gasped and swept the room with a startled glance, having no suspicion until this moment that death was in there with us. On a narrow board beside the front window, and lifted up until the sunlight caught her and the wind ruffled her garments, lay the body of Miss Winnie. She was wearing her best dress with a gray veil spread over her face, hands primly folded, eyes

closed. I have seen that same staunch, wrinkled look of confirmed sweetness on her face many a time when she sat leaning like a good little old pillow of the Word, fast asleep beneath this same gray veil.

The sweat popped out on me. I felt the usual tremor with which the perception of all miracles must be accompanied. I perceived the grim dignity of poverty which even in death is not able to borrow the toilet of a fine white shroud. Still, I felt the titter of some kind of hysterical humor rising in me. I could see Miss Winnie swishing down the aisle of the church wearing that air of pride and authority she always had in the house of her Lord — and nowhere else — going to her own funeral presently with one little frost-bitten flower in her hand. It was touching with that kind of pathos that brings on laughter.

We never can hold our high note. Something happens. The spotlight of comedy is always close to where we sit in a noble mood, inviting our angels, or, maybe, composing a keepsake sentence for immortal literature. Move one inch one way or the other and it gets us, sheds the light of a jest upon us and we become ridiculous. As near as I can tell, this is what happened to me that day. The inspiration to write a God-taking memorial to Miss Winnie was gone.

Over and over I had similar experiences that winter. I became the victim of my own grotesque wit; a sort of pallor spread over my mind, making it the mirror of realities. At last I gave up the idea of trying to write, and could find nothing else to do. When you have worked with one tool nearly thirty years, it is not easy to take up another one and go ahead. I could not substitute the needle for the pen. For the first time I grew

tired of this cabin. I have tried to grow my own antiques like an honest woman. Most of the furniture I have was purchased with the money I received for 'A Circuit Rider's Wife' when it appeared in the 'Saturday Evening Post.' The pieces may not be valuably old yet, but they have a more honorable history than things you buy merely because they are old. But now they appeared to me faded, worn out, in need of mending and furbishing up that real antiques must have before you can be vain about them. I could not bear the stir and confusion involved in this business. I did not want to do anything, nor even see things done. More particularly I did not want to read, which has been my chief diversion for years. This was no doubt on account of the black jealousy I felt toward other writers who could still rise upon the wings of their literary inspirations. I suffered from subconscious envy peculiar to critics. If my favorite author split an infinitive, I observed it with some kind of mean satisfaction, when I have always despised the doctrines of mere grammar, as I do certain ones the theologians have derived from the Scriptures, and held firmly to my own right to split up any kind of verb if the whole of it was liable to bulge too much in the middle of a sentence. What I mean is that it is much easier to be noble and generous in your judgment of others when you are in full possession of your own powers to achieve along the same line and feel that you may go them one better any time. This is the reason why the soldiers of the sixties never boasted of their deeds and courage in the Civil War until the young whippersnappers of this generation went into the World War and won so many victories. Their legs are stiff. They can no longer march into battle and de-

feat the enemy. This accounts for the suspicious and critical attitude so many old women have toward young and beautiful girls. They have no legs worth revealing. They have grown old, homely, and a bit stiff in their knees, and they have acquired by experience some meanly disillusioning knowledge of the significance of the airs and prancings of these young ones who are still innocent of themselves. It also explains the contemptuous intolerance brilliant modern materialists show toward spiritually minded people. They have lost the endowment of their own spiritual faculties and subconsciously resent the larking spirit of these simple wayfarers toward heavenly experiences when science proves there are no such experiences. They are outraged because this kind of ignorance cheats their wisdom and escapes with the substance of things unseen — which is perfectly silly, but they cannot stop it.

But these are after thoughts. I cut a sorry figure sitting before the log fire in this cabin in the drizzle of my own mind. I wondered if this depression was due to the arrival of old age at last. For years I have dreaded the dull, tired, complaining old person I expect to be, who will come in, take possession of me, skew up my hair on the back of my head and expose my high forehead literally smoking with wrinkles. She would lose interest in everything but her rheumatism and regard all I have accomplished here with a critical eye. There are no words to tell how I have feared her dominion and puling helplessness. I had no rheumatic twinges, still took a feminine interest in arranging my hair, and retained the habit I have always had of perking up my countenance when I passed a mirror; but I missed the dear vivacity of living.

FAITH
From the portrait by Ella Hergesheimer

The idea of giving up the fight and settling down into the good conscience and peace of old age never occurred to me. There is no such thing as a good conscience if you are honest with yourself. It is the vanity of moral braggarts. And I have always scorned the peace of saints. In my opinion it is an involuntary confession of spiritual laziness, or a proclamation of selfish satisfaction in a world filled with men and women not nearly so well off. Peace is for the dead, and may be a very dull experience, for all we know now. I will have none of it so long as living offers opportunities for enjoying normal human happiness. For fifty years I have been a trifle short on happiness. I always meant to finish up everything and live happy ever afterwards, as they do who have earned a fortune, retire from business, and live comfortably on their income. Now was the time to start on that adventure, but I was in no mood for it. A fearful light of reason had fallen upon me, depriving me of those powers of illusion so essential to happiness. The aura of gospels, hymns, and prayers beneath which I had lived faded out. It was like losing the bright canopy of the Word that had protected me for so many years from the dreadful shadows of realities.

I am just telling how I felt, because no doubt a great many people have been temporarily damned by the same kind of sensations. It is a sort of revolution which takes place where you really live on the inside. If you survive it, you do so by reconstructing your one-man civilization.

I went on taking a few Scriptures as usual during this period, merely from force of habit. They did me no good. I could see through them, if you are villainous enough to know what I mean.

One night my eye fell upon this passage in the Gospel according to Matthew: 'For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' I had always interpreted this as one evidence of a tender providence, which with His mercies, made no such distinction as we do. Now in one of those flashes of reason I mentioned a while ago, it was revealed to me that what this Scripture really means is that in the matter of sunlight and rainfall no man is considered, only the needs of the world as a whole, and a fearful indictment of our dearest doctrine of special providence.

I lay back in my chair astounded. Suppose other preachers besides Matthew had used the impersonal will of God in the same personal way to wheedle us along, as we reduce great truths to little tales to compliment and please children!

Now, if you have written a bit of poor copy, you can revise it or burn it; if the floods have washed away one crop, you can plant another, or go into bankruptcy for your fertilizer bill, as the case demands; if you have committed a transgression, you can repent and go ahead. I have had some practice along these lines and am reasonably proficient; but it is another business altogether to revise your sense of the Almighty, and maybe discover that you are one of the more doubtful insects of this providence; that His concern was to create a planet with laws that simply predestined us along with the leaves of the grass. Imagine a Christian woman mulled in the Word for fifty years having such thoughts! — I was that much down on my luck as a child of God, from not having been taught that the only special providence we enjoy is the extraordinary endowment we

have over all other creatures in the way of rational faculties and those spiritual aspirations which do foretell eternal life, else we should not have them. This is it, our intolerable honor and distinction — the power to think, the will to believe and achieve, always capable of making that polite contribution to the glory of God by conquering ourselves and every other adverse condition.

In short, He has made us creative and courageous in His own image and sentenced us to hard labor and all the vicissitudes of mind, flesh, and spirit to overcome by way of proving our origin.

This is a vast compliment He has paid us and does indicate a terrifically special providence; but, reducing it to my own personal dimensions, I no longer felt equal to living up to so many opportunities of the divine will. Having fathomed the meaning of that Scripture in Matthew, I resolved not to plant any more crops here until I was able one way or the other to control the floods and circumvent droughts with an irrigation system. For that is precisely what it means, and it is very expensive. The weather of the Lord may be good for the earth as a whole, but it can be very disastrous to the individual who lays the scenes of a year's hopes in fields of corn omitted from Nature's budget of rainfall that season.

I was tired of contending with so many ennobling adversities. I was tired of fighting so many good fights. The victories we win invariably thrust up against the next 'front.' I longed to drop back far behind all the battle lines I had ever bucked in living. Nothing can save any of us from the defeat of death. And I was never so much of a saint as to wish to die with my

spiritual boots on. Quite to the contrary, I wished to avoid ending like a poor old ruffian of the Lord without ever having practiced the gentle art of human happiness where so many scenes are laid in nature for innocent pleasure. I wanted to put a ring on my finger, wear a fine garment, and go about some, relieved of my responsibilities. I am as sparsely settled with virtues as the average respectable person. At that they make stony ground upon which to spend a vivacious old age. Only a fool can imagine himself righteous enough to be satisfied. Besides, mere righteousness is not satisfying. It is like the bones in your body, necessary, but not good-looking. I have been acquainted with too many bony-spirited saints not to know better than to make such a spectacle of myself. We require some other grace, some winged levity for a really lovable character. And I no longer felt lovable, a diminishing sensation many outrageously upright people endure with an air of superiority. I was never afflicted with that kind of static hypocrisy, but I have always made a more or less militant effort to keep up appearances as a good Christian woman. But mere appearances are deceitful. I have, for example, a lively temper which I never show in public, because only my Heavenly Father who seeth in secret knows how fiercely honorable my temper is. I began to long to go far enough away from where I had achieved all my reputations and where I might behave more veraciously without attracting attention.

I was not actually tired of my virtues, you understand, but I was for easing up on a few of my harsher principles, as one loosens up a tight garment at the end of a long hard day without being obliged to care how

she looks to people who cannot see her. It seemed to me that I had grown a trifle wasp-waisted, morally speaking, from copying my nobler attributes into so many books and trying to live up to the copy. Whatever else may be said of me, I have always been an earnest and indefatigable plagiarist of the best virtues. When you think about it, this is the only way to acquire them. We are not born virtuous, but very weakly innocent.

The modern phrase used to cover my growing aspiration, as that fearful winter of discontent dragged on, is 'be yourself.' I despise it as the most wanton motto ever translated from our lower nature to delude fools into acting gallantly according to their primitive instincts. It depends entirely upon what kind of person you are whether you can afford to 'be yourself' without becoming a menace to society. But I have always entertained the theory that it is reasonably safe for men and women, well grounded in the principles of good conduct and who have acquired a taste for decency, to trust themselves without clinging so frantically to the Lord for strength to enable them to behave properly. What is the use of practicing chastity, temperance, and faith, if you remain to the last the poor creature of your ignoble lower nature, with no faith at all in yourself?

I was for giving myself a few airs, in spite of that Scripture which says, 'Take heed when you stand, lest you fall.' Like many others it has been misinterpreted, and really refers to those occasions when you vaunt yourself like a duck-legged pharisee upon the too lofty pedestal of your righteous vanities. I was not planning to stand very high. My habit has always

been to remain on the level and merely encourage myself by contemplating the shining heights of saints as the promised land of my soul. It is safer.

Whatever happened I was determined to keep my soul, because being accustomed to having one for so many years I could scarcely be myself without this kind of winged consciousness. But the way I figured it out was that I was also in desperate need of spiritual rest, if you know what I mean. There is no distinction in feeling like a 'valorous worm storming the gates of paradise,' and I was in that state of woeful weariness as an immortal soul, no wings, merely a wriggle. There must be some pleasanter, easier use I could make of mine without offending it.

Just so I moped in my cabin during the whole of that winter, with the drenching rains falling outside, and the high winds blowing the smoke down the chimney inside. As a prisoner works long and tediously in secret to effect his escape, so I followed the trails of thought copied here for the benefit of many tired, dutiful men and women who might enjoy a healthier salvation if they reached the same conclusion, even if they only go into the next county, and sit down and rest for a few days among strangers who do not know enough about them to discover that they are not acting up to their usual diligence in the mere rectitudes of living.

I resolved to get away from this Valley, change all my scenes for better or worse, and try the adventure of going abroad in the world with no missionary intentions against it.

This was the most valorous act of faith I ever performed.

II

One day early in the spring of 1925 I hopped off in the high air of my own mind and started on my travels — no fogs nor untoward winds between me and the farthest ends of the earth. Bodily speaking, it was safer going by rail than flying too artificially through the heavens in an aeroplane, but this was the only precaution I took against the law of gravity.

Birds are the best travelers without maintaining any such thing as an avarian tourist agency. They simply rise upon their wings and disappear, guided by their own beaks. This is the way to travel when you are bent upon recovering the liberty of your spirit and have no sight-seeing, cultural intentions toward your own mind that oblige you to stop over long enough to go through a cathedral or to take in an art gallery when you are too exhausted from the effects of seasickness to care a thing about art. But you must cram all these masterpieces in time to take the train that afternoon for some other place of damnable interest, where you force down a little more information by the same hurried neck-stretching, leg-aching process.

I was too wise to let myself in for the tyranny of a tourist programme. My ticket read to Santa Barbara, California, for no reason that I can think of, except that if you live in the north your migratory instinct is to go south, and if you are already in the south, your wildest wing fancy leads you to go as far west as possible. I have noticed this about people in my section; they may be obliged by circumstances to go east upon

occasion, or even sail for Europe for conscience' sake, but I never knew one of us who did not entertain the desire to climb over the western horizon of his little narrow days and go prospecting there for whatever he could find, preferably gold, but anything would do so long as he found it, or saw it in the yellow light of the setting sun.

I had letters of introduction to some people in Australia and reservations on a boat that sailed for Honolulu in June. I planned to stop at the Samoan Islands and visit the grave of Robert Louis Stevenson, but more particularly to rest awhile in that quiet place to consider certain circumstances connected with this incomparable writer's genius which have always puzzled me. How was it that a sick man in bed could fling the leg of his hero over a horse's back with so much vehemence, send him forth to fight, bleed, and survive the dangers and hardships of a terrific adventure which Stevenson invariably copied in with the animation and vividness of actual experiences? He retained to the last, even in this languid south sea air, the same wind-whistling use of words, the same bristling frostiness in his literary style which he acquired as a youth tramping the heathery hills of Scotland in bad weather. Very few of his heroes ever sweat, no matter how hot the country where their scenes are laid nor what arduous labors they perform. A man must be the son of his father, but the mind Stevenson had was sired by immortal courage, and its dam was a storm-ridden night.

There is no sense in such reflections, but I was resolved not to be dumbly sensible during this journey. I coveted a little of that sword-flashing, lily-scented wisdom which lies beyond. Here high above the sea lay

the dust of Stevenson, the bravest knight of the pen who has lived in my times, and to have the leisure at last to sit down and thrash out my memories of him, where his great battle to live ended, was one of those boons of idleness I coveted.

I would catch the next boat, or the next one after that, and arrive sometime or other in Australia. Dear hearts, what rest and freedom there is in traveling ahead of yourself with as yet no fatigues of the journey to endure, and no hurried sensation in your mind about getting to where you are going on time! For years and years I had been the slave of clocks that ticked too fast to tell the truth of the swiftly passing hours. My feeling now is that it requires considerable philosophy and some talent to become a tramp, to deliver yourself from the bondage of time, and to prefer poverty, rags, and hunger to drawing this singletree of time behind you like a thrifty, dutiful citizen. It calls for a more gallant sense of immortality than saints have. Yet I never knew a tramp who showed the least sense of that kind about wasting time. Some mystery here! A fool practicing the philosophy and freedom of life as do the lower animals, deriving no wing power from his experiences. Maybe we must serve a long apprenticeship to hard labor before we earn the right to idleness. Somebody pays for it. This is the reason I take no stock in certain socialist doctrines. They are evolved by people who want to take a lifetime vacation at the expense of their fellow men.

If there was any chance of sailing directly from an Australian port for Italy, I expected to spend the remainder of that holy year in the Pope's neighborhood, because the Roman Catholic religion appeals to me. It

reads more simply, but is more cunningly adjusted to the frailties, the childishness, and the sacrificial instincts of men in a spiritual mood after transgression than my own sterner creed, which, after all, is not so exacting, and lets go a man once he is dead without predicting him through purgatory. Still, I like to thrust my knees against the hard stone floor of an ancient cathedral, bow my old Protestant head before an altar that has been kissed for ages by pious lips, without committing the indelicacy of saying the prayer of a foreign creed there. Catholics surpass all other Christians in the nobility of the religious scenery they provide for worshipers. I have always found it easy to remember the Lord in such places. I experience a curiously tender admiration toward the Virgin Mary. It is not nearly so bad to worship her as it is to canonize one of your own sins as a virtue. And the exalted splendors of that place do seem to be in keeping with my faith in the divinity of Jesus. This is not sacrilege, nor even heresy; it is being polite and adaptable spiritually. I go as far as I honorably can the way Catholics would have all men go. The truth is I am so cordial to other men's religious idealism that I could never risk entering a Hottentot temple, for example, lest my manners as a Christian guest should be too cordial to a heathen deity. I have learned long since to beware of my spiritual weakness along this line. There is no more effective way of damning your own soul than being too polite to other men's gods. I can step across the adverse doctrines of any other Christian denomination and worship without a qualm according to my own conscience. I can even bear with a heathen without trying to proselytize him, if his virtues and civilization prove

that he believes in and obeys a noble god; but the man toward whom I maintain a lively intolerance is the one who makes a sort of golden calf image of his own rational faculties and invites me to worship that. But let that go. I am a free lance when it comes to religious faith, and can be convicted of many contradictions by any kind of smart Aleck.

Another reason I had for heading toward Italy was the desire to get a local impression of Mussolini. If you want a truthful likeness made of the person you really are, sit to a village photographer who is not enough of an artist to prevaricate in your favor by retouching the unflattering negative of your countenance. I have some of his gifts for receiving mental impressions of other people. And I was anxious to discover whether Mussolini is the poster of his political ambitions, the ideal of his own combustible imagination, or some kind of mediæval patriot. One writer pictures him as a demigod, another as a demagogue. No one has yet accused him of adopting the political philosophy of that other Italian statesman, Macchiavelli. Still some lively accounts have been published of his paternal tyrannies in matters of government. Certainly his versatility varies all the way from the comic to the heroic. Very few reformers ever started a revolution by forcibly administering castor oil to their enemies. Very few despots ever kept a tamed king, or fondled a pet lion without getting scratched. He is the only hero ever shot by a spinster who still survived as the serious idol of his people. In short, that is some kind of great man who cannot be diminished by any kind of absurdity or ridiculed for his own whimsical brutalities. He seems to me the most notable example of atavism

we have in the world to-day, without the sinister meaning that term usually conveys of reversion to a lower type. He says some very smart things, such as that Italy is too poor to maintain the extravagance of a representative government, such as we have. And Heaven knows that is the truth! He is too thrifty to revive the mere appearance of the splendid scenery of Imperial Rome, but he has set himself to the task of supervising the rebuilding of its glories as if he were one of the original patriarchs who expected to live a thousand years. Meanwhile, he actually is reviving the spirit and pride of ancient Romans in the narrow breasts of mere Italians. He has not enough power to spread imperially, nor enough power in this modern world to hold his high note. When it is all over there will be no Mark Antony to count his wounds and deliver his funeral oration. Nevertheless, Mussolini is a romantic figure of speech in an unromantic age who will leave the trail of a bright sentence behind him in the history of our times, which was reason enough for wanting to see him in the flesh.

This was as far as I had scanned the epic of my travels in advance. I had no definite point in view about where or when I should face about and start for home. This was to be a long pilgrimage with countries and continents for inns by the way.

Can you see me going off without my Scriptures, like a cheerful old graduate of the Lord, to have a good time, visiting mountain-tops, inspecting heroes, and practicing the simplest arts of human happiness, without having the least notion or fear of what would happen next?

I was disguised as an elderly woman in a black dress

of archaic length, sitting surrounded by dingy-looking bags in a Pullman car attached to that train known as the 'Royal Palm.' My hair was smoothed back, and I wore a pleasant expression, if I may be permitted to cast the benefit of a compliment upon my own countenance. But I was really no such person. I was a happy old soldier of fortune, mustered out and pensioned at last. I had no intention of doing another stroke of work or of ever conquering my soul again.

It was queer how I felt — very tired, but gay, released from my years, memories, and former circumstances. I cannot be sure, but looking back now it seems to me that I had some of the symptoms of second childhood, a freshening curiosity about unimportant little things, the disposition to wave my hand as children do to strangers when we flashed past stations without stopping. I must have given the impression to my fellow travelers of being a lively old immigrant from the day coaches. I was ready to catch anybody's eye, smile, exchange the greeting of bobbing my head, with the hope of thus beginning a conversation. This was no way for a well-bred woman to act, but I had abandoned the manners and customs of my narrower years, even the artificial refinements so meekly acquired by long years of practice. I was abroad in the world where the motto is 'Be yourself.' This is a rôle which calls for more liberty and good will than any perfect lady ever dares exercise.

But no one took the least notice of my gentle blandishments. The people in that car appeared to be profoundly distrustful of each other, though they impressed me as being respectable.

I was not dismayed, but went on gossiping about

them in my secret mind until I probably knew more about them than they would have admitted. Little profit, however, is to be derived from the study and translation of Pullman-car types. They seem to rub out all their real copy as human beings and make up for the journey they are to take together. Something cowardly about so much discretion, if you want to know what I think. But in all my travels I did not see a single man or woman in a Pullman who, by any feat of the imagination, could be propped up into the hero or heroine of a brave tale. No doubt great people are among them, but something in the atmosphere of the situation depresses them into the commonplace.

This impertinent silence lasted for two days. Then a little bald-headed man who sat two sections beyond mine, and who had been studying a railroad folder all that time, suddenly leaped to his feet, strode down the aisle waving the thing, and shouting in a choir tenor voice:

'We are two hundred and fifty feet below the sea level!'

He repeated this cry several times on his way out to the next coach, much as a brakeman might yell the name of a station, or a newsboy call out the headlines of a tragedy in the afternoon paper.

The only notice his fellow passengers took of him was to stiffen as nice people do sometimes when another person makes a fool of himself. I could not repress a titter, knowing very well what was the matter with him. It was not because we were flying along the dusty bottom of what had been an inland sea ages ago, but his nerves had snapped from enduring such a long

silence. It was like suffering solitary confinement with everybody present. I figured that the rest of us would go off with a bang presently.

That is precisely what happened. The people in that car began to mill, skip back and forth across the aisle to exchange opinions, discuss the sand, the weather, and the scenery. When they settled down again, they were all engaged to each other, so to speak. Several card games were begun. Two elderly men who had been eyeing each other bitterly since we left New Orleans began a discussion of golf that lasted until they parted at Los Angeles. What had appeared to be a demure young girl suddenly raised the head of a flapper, reached up one little plucked eyebrow at a young university student, and began an open-and-aboveboard flirtation. They spoke a foreign language of English words with a fluency that was simply maddening to me who have acquired some reverence for words. The bald-headed man came back subdued and resumed the reading of his railroad folder. The poor soul had raised the wind, but had found no companion to share his excitement. He had shattered the spell of silence in that car and made the dumb speak, but nobody was grateful to him for this service. I have had similar experiences of gratitude, talked myself weary to a circle of stupid people whose wits had perished from lack of mental nourishment, only to have them go off and say — 'That woman is a frightful monologue of herself!' — when all the time I longed to escape from the staring, dumb discourtesy of their silence. But let that go. We are all meaner than we think we are.

During this period of social readjustment a firm-featured, pigeon-breasted woman who occupied the

section behind mine came around and slid into the seat opposite me.

She said the weather was very hot.

I told her yes, any kind of weather would heat up in a desert furnace.

She said that was 'true.'

In spite of this banal comment I perceived her to be a woman of parts, if you know what I mean — not so much intelligence, but endowed with some kind of hard-fisted ability. No liquid, feminine sweetness in her expression. She had a good constitution, florid complexion, strong blue eyes, straightforward gaze that could be disconcerting if you had been guilty of an error of judgment. The kind of woman who could hammer and be hammered without yielding to tears.

She said she was from Wisconsin and that it was cooler there.

I said that I was from Georgia and it was cooler there.

We were matching no more than pennies of information with each other, but I knew she was getting ready to tell me who she was — somebody of importance undoubtedly. I knew that much by the way I was feeling myself, not exactly antagonistic, but 'up' as the saying goes, because I could but notice that she lacked my powers of discernment in such matters. We went on goading each other with our personal pronouns until she could bear mine no longer. Then she told me her name and added that she was the president of the Woman's Club in M——, mentioning the name of a large city.

I recognized that club because I had been invited to address the members of it, but I resisted the tempta-

IN THE VALLEY: THE CABIN IN 1913.
Built and occupied before 1830 by the Indian chief Pine Log

tion to tell her that and so disclose my identity. You may think that you are modestly indifferent to your own distinction if you have any, but if you have labored a lifetime in secret to earn it, and rarely ever go abroad with your skimpy laurels published on your brow, and then find yourself unhonored and unsung for three days in a coach filled with people who are probably familiar with your works, you do long to leap up and spring yourself as a glad surprise in some modest, graceful way. These sensations are not peculiar to me. In my goings to and fro upon the earth I have crossed the trail of more than one famous man or woman who did do it under less provocation. It is safer to make free with strangers in such matters than with diminishing friends who know our limitations, whether they have read our works or not. But I held fast to my integrity, having discovered that it augments one's own private vanity not to publish one's accomplishments, nor to mention those intimacies we think we have with great people.

I am merely telling you how I felt sitting opposite this prominent woman. Her look was subtly diminishing. I could see myself photographed upon the retina of her eye as a mild, kind, round-faced old person with no sign of wit in my own eyeballs. Finally, after further conversation, all in her favor, I compromised between pride and childishness by telling her my name was Mary Thompson, and that I was the widow of a Methodist itinerant. I accompanied this information with the modest, self-conscious look a public speaker bestows upon his audience when he has said something worthy of applause and waits a perceptible moment in expectation of that reward. Nothing doing! She

did not recognize the heroine of the Circuit Rider stories.

I was not exactly peeved, but under these circumstances there was no reason why I should go on helping her praise herself. No other attribute we have calls for so much reciprocity as vanity. I let her have the other cheek by turning away and staring through the window as if she was no longer present.

This was the last effort I made to penetrate the social atmosphere of that car. I reflected that every man and woman in it might be looking for an audience, a use we frequently make of strangers. This, indeed, may be the explanation of that defensive silence Pullman passengers undertake to maintain against each other. It is not characteristic of those in day coaches, who are not so concerned to exploit themselves as they are curious to find out everything they can about their fellow travelers — a more complimentary attitude of attention, whether they are aware of that fact or not.

The great gray scroll of the desert intervened between me and the people in that sultry car. It covered them up so completely that now I recall with an effort even the italicized features of the prominent woman. The only vivid recollection I have of any of them is of the poor little man who cried out when we first slid into the depths of the desert. He remained static after that, but with the round bald spot on his head showing above the back of the seat in front of me. Invariably it reddened and glistened with sweat when we plunged into a lower depth, paled and cooled like a biscuit thermometer when we ascended. The recollections I have of that vast waste of sand, tall mountains, and dead rivers is disfigured, outrageously punctuated, by

the bald spot on that wretched man's head. The subconscious mind may caricature your noblest visions with some such absurdity.

I have always had a longing for immeasurable spaces which no width of seas can satisfy. The most placid ocean I have ever traveled was no more to me than the vast mollusk of space incessantly moving its hide, writhing and griping. The insensate motion it keeps up affects me most unhappily. I turn sick with the anguished desire for one ship's length of solid stillness. And if you have been one day's width of it, you have seen it all, one element, water, and yet more water, no will of its own to move, but being moved incessantly. No color, borrowing its lights and shadows from the sun, the blue and gray of its loveliness from the heavens—what I mean is that I have no mariner's soul. I lack even the faith of an ordinary Christian woman to steady me the moment I trust myself to the insubstantial thing. It is subject to the moods of every wind that blows.

How much more engaging and trustworthy the land is! No piece of it, however small, looks like the next acre. No one hill is like another hill. It changes from season to season, from age to age, by some principle of life in itself. It grows old, fades away—is born again in time, young and fair, hung with bridal boughs of bloom. A maiden, a mother, the sepulcher of us all, covering us deep with the dust of her heart, remembering us ten thousand years with her living green. Who calls the sea 'eternal'?—O eternal earth! forever old, forever young, who can portray the majesty and sweetness of thy face, the gardens of beauty between thy great breasts! These mountains that lift thy forests

like giant plumes into the heavens, these flowing rivers that gird thy meadows like wedding bands! Show me one flower that blooms in the trough of the seas, one lark's nest in the foam of its waves! It is a reservoir, a breeding-tank that Nature used to use. Give me the land, and a long, long, winding road that leads forever beyond!

The rim of the desert is very wide and green in April. It was not until we had passed down into the naked sands of it, where so many ages lie buried, that the spell of it fell upon me like a sleep. Awake now somewhere else, beyond all the conditions and circumstances that produced the mind I had had! What ease at last to be caught up without being caught up 'in the spirit'! No aspirations, no desires, no memories — absorbed in this wide gray silence beneath the torrid sun, breathing this hot air like a cleansing heat. I had no sensations, either of sadness, weariness, or happiness. I was nothing, and the desert was everything. I shall never know such complete rest again in this world.

During that first day we passed through little villages, eked out around water-tanks. Dark men moving languidly there like strong figures in a dream; Indian squaws squatting beside the railroad track with beads to sell — ugly, mysterious creatures, with their fat faces half-veiled in long black hair that spread over their shoulders as coarse as a horse's tail, smiling, always lifting their hands to hide these smiles — aboriginal sex betraying self-consciousness with desert modesty.

Now and then a work train showed up like a long red caterpillar on the bright, burning rails. Mexican men walking back and forth, carrying nothing, but moving

with the weariness of men who bear terrific burdens, oppressed by the heat, not talking, sulking, resenting each other's company. Dark women, bareheaded, dipping shallow pans of water from barrels to wash their florid rags, no two of them gossiping together after the manner of women. Naked children asleep in the sand, not playing as other children do. A squalid scene laid for human tragedy in the desert, where heat, thirst, loneliness, and hunger breed hatred, murder, and the most abominable crimes. I doubt if faithful friends could endure there to the end without betraying each other: one will desert or slay the other if the question arises as to which should have the remainder of the food and water to survive. Nobody has ever found the skeletons of two men side by side in the desert.

To survive there one must survive alone. This is what one feels. No speech, no communion — only that sharing of the awful meaning and silence of the desert with the desert which unfits us for the mercies and softness of human companionship. It is the Old Testament of the earth, harsh and terrible.

We came at last to that part where every vestige of animal life disappeared, only the bleaching bones of beasts, old and very white. They could not decay and turn back to dust in this place where there was not enough of the lowest life of worms to produce decay. Horizons widened upon this ghostly waste, nothing to cast a shadow, night coming down from nowhere; day breaking over it as if this was the familiar home of the pale gray light of dawn where nothing else could exist but light and darkness. No change, until tall cactus columns began to appear like monuments raised to heat and thirst upon this dying land that could not die,

foreordained through all the ages to live, a Promethean waste, bound to these sands waiting for deliverance.

Once your ordinary senses leave you in peace and imagination takes hold of your faculties, there is no marking of days and hours in your mind. A thousand years is as a day, and a day may stretch into centuries. Just so I lost account of time, and I cannot tell now when certain mountains rose above the horizon on either side of the railroad over which our train was flying. But they were not like any mountains I had ever seen before, snow-capped, lofty as that above the furnace of burning sand, naked, smooth, and as brilliant in the light of the sun as the jasper and amethyst walls of heaven. And they seemed to be closing in upon us, heading us off in the immediate distance. I do not know how I received this impression, but they appeared to be literally flying with incredible swiftness, as the train moved and climbed more and more laboriously. The same mountains, you understand, drawing nearer, majestic and terrible, their bright sides flashing in the sun, carrying their peaks like white plumes, sky-high. Then a thunderous roaring in my ears, breathless oppression, horror at the flying herd of mountains that suddenly changed to blood red.

This was the last vision I had of the desert. It was growing dark before my senses returned to me. The train was fairly swimming through the gloom, as swift and noiselessly as that. Something had eased up. I could breathe. The windows of my section were open, no dust; cool air pouring in — not furnace-cooked; strips of green showing on the gray level land outside; trees standing in squares on the dim horizon where those dazzling mountains swept by in a terrible race —

not tall trees, bunchy, hand-trimmed, no paleness of the desert upon them, neatly dressed in their dark green leaves; obedient, yes! Staying where they were put. 'Better people!' I reflected in the confusion of returning consciousness. I was too faint to think in the terms of active verbs, but went on languidly trailing the adverbs and participles of my thoughts. The feeling I had was that of a traveler who has nearly died in a savage land when at last he staggers across the border into a civilized land where the air and water Nature provides is genial to life. I shall never feel more genial in heaven than I did at that moment.

'All right now, getting your wind back?' a voice interrupted, and I was aware of the fact that a man with the medicinal countenance all doctors wear was bending over me.

I still lacked the 'wind' to tell him how gay and saved I felt. They who come near the breath-taking experience of death must know the same refreshing satisfaction at finding themselves alive again.

'You made the grade, but it was a close shave,' the doctor went on presently. 'Better be careful. How much farther are you going?'

'Santa Barbara,' I told him.

'You will make it. But go to bed and see a doctor when you get there,' he warned.

With some further assurances he took his leave and joined the procession of passengers going forward to the dining-car.

I was left alone, and in my normal mortal mind for the first time since we had slid over the green rim of the desert on Tuesday. I knew I was in my right senses because, after you have spent two days and nights in your

imagination racing with mountains across the desert, your normal mind is depressing. It is like coming home to the same old house after a long journey and the same old worn-out things there you left when you started, disheveled memories, loose leaves of thoughts blown helter and skelter, forgotten plans scrawled in the dust of that place, something started here, and something else begun there, nothing finished. By the shortest of hyphens in thinking now I suddenly connected what had just happened to me with other experiences, not similar, but equal to the same thing. On this train I had merely fought another one of those good fights, this time to keep soul and body together, and had survived as usual by the skin of my teeth. This is the dominant characteristic of all the good fights I have ever had, whether in the effort to outwit misfortune, survive devastating sorrows with courage, or establish the work of my hands. The effort invariably left me exhausted, ready to drop, but obliged to go on to the next engagement. This, I reflected, was no way to begin a pilgrimage in search of happiness. I had traveled three thousand miles to get a change of venue in living, and here I was flat on my back before reaching the end of the first lap in my journey.

I am equipped by nature with two essentials for fighting good fights, and neither one bears the name of a virtue. They are temper and tenacity. One is a red-hot wedge of the spirit, and the other is the bench-legged front of the kind of mind I have. In the last ditch I am capable of negotiating a compromise, but not of surrendering a purpose. I once backed, figuratively speaking, into the Strait of Gibraltar, when there was no intelligible reason for going through it at all,

except that it seemed to me important to cover all the ground conceivable to my mind. This was in 1911. I was going abroad for the first time and quite without consulting anybody I resolved to land at the Strait of Gibraltar. In vain did friends more accustomed to ocean travel endeavor to convince me that I could not approach the lofty, sweet, lazy end of Europe by landing there. I fought it out with every steamship company in the country, and was obliged at last to disembark at another port. But that whole summer I traveled and doubled on my tracks in order to sail for home from Naples by way of the Strait of Gibraltar. This turned out for the best, because William Dean Howells came aboard there, and I received a great deal of sad information from him about the way an author should conduct herself. His advice was so good that I have never been able to practice much of it.

But what I mean is that my powers of tenacity are overwhelmingly stronger than my powers of reason, which of course relegates me to the lower plane of intellects. Even so, I have observed that willful people frequently achieve more in proportion to their natural ability than those better endowed mentally. The disposition to think reasonably of the difficulties involved in the enterprise may defeat a man before he tries his might against them. I never insult myself by taking a dare. When my funeral notice finally appears in our county paper, it will be known by all those people who have known me personally that I did not die of a disease, but from the effort to do something that I no longer had the wit or strength to accomplish.

If I do say it myself, no woman has a more docile disposition or a milder temper under ordinary circum-

stances. I have bowed many a time with Christian brevity beneath the rod of misfortune without lashing out at Providence. I used always to obey my husband; that is to say, I do not remember ever withstanding him, unless perhaps in the matter of a little grudge I held at one time against Saint Paul when Lundy was his indignant defender. But this was a purely theological controversy involving strong language, but no real purpose I had in living. I practiced my temper and tenacity in secret for Lundy's benefit, and there could be no clash between us because he never knew much about my plans for him. But just let any obstructionist rise up any time during the last fifteen years to tell me I cannot do the thing I intend to do, and I see red. I not only hate that man; I despise him. His brains have made a coward of him and he is trying to impart his highly intellectual limitations to me — and so on and so forth — I can abuse him for hours, turn him and wring him until his mildewed morals show between the soiled pages of his glittering mind, and enjoy this exercise of my own hobnailed virtues — the man, of course, having taken to his heels; and I am doing all this, with a woman's usual discretion, behind his back.

There is only one other class of people for whom I entertain the same kind of animosity. These are the intolerant, 'broad-minded' citizens who call certain other people bigots and hypocrites because they do not agree with them concerning matters for the common good — the Eighteenth Amendment, for example. In the first place, this is no argument against their fidelity to the law, even if they are themselves drunkards. You can be morally faithful to one ideal, even if you are physically an inebriate. Also, bigots are notorious for

the good they have accomplished in spite of the charity professed by sentimental weaklings for their own benefit. And there is no bigot among us so intolerant as those who show out behind the pewter platter of broad-mindedness. This country was wrested from the wilderness and its pioneer civilization founded upon the laws of strictest integrity by those honest old hypocrites who hanged witches around Boston and committed many transgressions in the effort to establish the liberties we now enjoy. Their methods may have been heinous at times, but their intentions were above reproach. No such defence can be made for these modern Pharisees. What they want is a license in living at the expense of other people's convictions, rights, and decencies. You may be as logical and broad-minded as you like in thinking, but you can be neither the one nor the other in living because here we are in the realm of instincts, appetites, emotions, which have nothing to do with logic or purely artificial thinking. It is expedient then to tighten up the harness of laws upon our creature natures, which are singularly creaturefied in the ramping, broad-minded class. They are the shrewdest of all hypocrites in their efforts to obstruct the development of a civilization safe for women and children, who are always in the majority and the least able to protect themselves.

But let that go. I set out to record my own attitude toward obstructionists. It was never the hardships of poverty, grief, and anxiety that I found most difficult to overcome, but always one of these impotent intellectuals who had never accomplished anything, but had the gift of the devil for reasoning away my powers to achieve by hinting gravely and kindly at my limita-

tions, either of sex, scholarship, or native ability. To have withstood them required a great deal of impudence, but you are bound to admit that it was an impudence founded upon some kind of asinine courage, which is better than having no courage at all or being the mean critic of valor in other people.

The conscious or subconscious fortifications I have had to maintain against the discouragement bestowed upon me by such people explain the hotness of my spirit. During that last winter at home I had unaccountable spells of vehemence which only the very pure in heart could have distinguished from fits of temper. I could neither think nor work. I had lost my dear powers of inspiration and interpretations which are the only ones I possess as a writer. The superstition fell upon me that at last I had fallen under the spell of conscious incompetence such people had so often endeavored to cast upon me. Never once did I suspect it was due to a physical condition, because during the greater part of my working years I have never been ill enough to go to bed and send for the doctor. But I have regarded doctors as the benignant enemies of my spirit and have always avoided having anything to do with them.

Even now, lying back in my seat in this car, staring out into the swimming darkness of the night, it did not occur to me that I was really ill. People in good health frequently lost their breath when they were hoisted over a great altitude across such mountains as we had just passed. What irritated me was the struggle to breathe even now on the level earth. I felt another fit of vehemence coming on accompanied by a frightful wheezing. And I was able to calm myself only by re-

solving not to omit one jot or tittle of the long pilgrimage I had planned. No Christian Scientist has more power than I have for coaching the body of me to its feet by the exercise of a healthy mind, though I never mix my religion with my food or any other act of nature: in my opinion, it is discourteous to the Lord. But for them it is permissible, because they are too physically minded to comprehend the delicacy and decencies of religious manners. At that, there is something shrewdly childish about the way they lay the scenes of all their religious benefits in mortal experience. Instead of exhorting a sinner to forsake the error of his ways and seek a closer walk with God, they teach him that he can eat a half-cooked roasting ear of corn without gas toxic distress, even though he has practiced the most virulent form of nervous indigestion for years. More than that, they can get away with it. I have seen their converts do it. This is a tremendous argument in favor of their doctrines. But I'll stick to it till I die that they are not religious doctrines. Many a time I have taken up my bed and walked, so to speak, performed a prodigious day's work with a high temperature, but I never would claim to have done this by the grace of God, except in the roundabout way of having overcome physical weakness by that tenacity and willfulness with which I was endowed from the beginning. But it is all in the point of view and in the creed color we give to the definition of words. Your Christian Scientist does not believe in death, for example. He does not die; he 'passes on.' This comes to the same thing as our doctrine of immortality. I do not suppose the Lord minds the trickery we all practice with the terms we apply to Him and His works any more than we should be intol-

erant of the hypnotism a Scientist practices upon himself for his stomach's sake. We are all children meaning extremely well by ourselves in His name one way or the other.

I arrived shortly after midnight of a starlit April morning at the Miramar, four miles out from Santa Barbara. This is not, literally speaking, a hotel. The old ranch house is still the family residence of those who came after the original builder. It stands, you may say, within speaking distance of the waves of the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by trees and an immense rainbow puddle of flowers. Here and there tiny brown cottages are etched into the rim of this rainbow, low-flung beneath the trees. I had one of the least of these. Calla lilies stood as tall as altar candles around this cottage. Fuchsia trees swung their rose and lavender bells against the window-panes. And through a blossoming hedge of tall geraniums I could catch a glimpse of the ocean. Paradise scenery, very quiet, a good place to relax and rest.

Nevertheless I did not sleep. I doubt if any one sleeps soundly the first night in Paradise, and I was as peaceful as that, but awake, you understand, as if I was sitting up with myself in case something happened — queer sensation.

The next morning I had another attack of vehemence, all the sensations of violent excitement, my heart fluttering like an angry old bird in my breast, with nothing in the world to be angry about.

The doctor came and there was a great to-do — X-rays, cardiograms, measurements and tests, and consultations. While I was about it I ran the whole

gamut of the medical profession in that place from the doctor who took any kind of case from one in abstruse obstetrics to meningitis to the reigning heart specialist; not that I hold with specialists on principle, but I was after trying them all out to get a more favorable diagnosis if possible. Nothing doing — I had a serious case of heart trouble, incurable: only way to prolong life was to rest completely for the present, sleep twelve hours a day; must not stand on my feet, must not turn over suddenly, but turn slowly, creepingly; must not work, and above everything else must not talk!

There is no occasion to go further into details. The symptoms of a defective heart are precisely the same as those of hysteria. I have known more than one woman to live to a green old age who nursed her good stout old heart like a frail orchid in her bosom, flinging fits upon the slightest provocation in order to tyrannize over her family, always threatening to die and never making good at dying. They are the disciples of selfishness practicing the histrionics of morbid courage.

This is the test — if you are being victimized by one of these pale, sweet dramatists of nerves, remove her audience, leave the palpitating heroine resting uncomfortably on the floor where she fell under the expectation of being caught up in your strong arms as she went down. Her motive is horror, but she cannot put the thrills into her act if no one is present to watch and suffer with her through the performance. If you must stand by, give her a strong dose of aromatic spirits of ammonia. It is an anæmic medicine, but effective in relaxing neurasthenic *tragédiennes*. Once the sweat pops out on her cold marble-white forehead, she is undone, she cannot hold her note, and you get the tears

she meant to shed from the first moment of her seizure. But she will hold on to her 'murmur' to the last, and nothing will cure her unless you commit the brutality of leaving her to writhe alone in her self-imposed anguish.

Such treatment is of no avail, however, in case of a really defective heart. Nothing can be done. You simply face your Heavenly Father more intimately from day to day, not according to your comfortable faith in a far-off immortal life, but according to the very grave fear you have of becoming immortal sooner than you expected.

For a long time I could not grow accustomed to this feature of my case. Whenever I was awakened in the darker hours of the night by a very small pointed pain, sharp and sudden as a rapier thrust into the heart, the experience was invariably accompanied by a cold sweat of terror. I expected every time to be 'asleep in Jesus' before morning, as the old script reads on so many tombs in forgotten churchyards. But when this happened frequently and I found myself alive in time for breakfast as usual, I digested my fears and left outraged Nature to cut her capers. Observe, the fits of temper to which I had been subject for months changed to fits of fear, due entirely to the fact that I now knew what had me by the throat. I doubt if the most exasperating tenant I ever had in the Valley could have provoked me to wrath. Wrath under these circumstances was an indulgence too dangerous to risk. No better imitation of meekness ever existed in the humblest Christian soul than I now practiced. The way to face the inevitable is to be quiet about it. Do not stir the blasted thing up or it will destroy you.

IN THE VALLEY, AS ENLARGED FROM THE ORIGINAL INDIAN CABIN

There is a shrewd economist, a sort of silent partner in the last one of us, who never figures as favorably as he should in the histories and biographies we write of men. This other person we are prepares us for all our emergencies and for the inevitable at last, whether it is death or some greater misfortune. How is it that the blind have such a reputation for cheerfulness? Why is it that deaf people so rarely complain of their affliction, but sit politely silent among us, grateful as beggars who receive alms if we are sufficiently generous to raise our voices by way of letting them in on the ground floor of the conversation! There may be men who have overcome their instincts so far by the practice of rationalism that they can die bravely, materialists to the last, but I have never known one with that much courage, and I have accompanied both atheists and bawling sinners into the shadows of death. Without exception, at the last moment, that other person in every one of them pops up and arranges matters comfortably for him, clears the dust from the vision of his mortal mind hurriedly, in time for him to embrace the great doctrine of immortality without passing through a sort of theological scourge to arrive. His religion is shortened up and simplified for him in this last emergency — not by the preacher who attends him — no, sir! — though a preacher is a great convenience at such a moment; but even if he dies alone on the edge of black darkness, that other person makes a light and pilots him out, reconciled and blessed as any other hard-riding old saint.

Whatever interpretation we may prefer for defining Providence, even according to that circumstance recorded of how He sends the sun to shine and the rain to

fall alike upon the just and the unjust, it is certain that He has predicted us according to a plan of peace by faith that cannot fail.

Just so, some meeker woman of my spirit whose influence I had not felt for sixteen years took charge of my affairs and laid me out. This was not the change I had planned, but it certainly was a change, to be resting propped high on these pillows three thousand miles from the place where I had formed the habits of doing and achieving, and as many miles as that from any friend or relative who could weaken my horizontal fortitude by sitting up with me, watching me, and worrying over my condition. Even lying down, one stands a better chance of coming out of an illness normal and tenacious if he takes to his bed among strangers and avoids the debilitating attentions of trained nurses; good people to have around if you cannot feed yourself, but not otherwise. Strangers are kind enough, but they are not morbidly involved in your fate. They visit you, bring flowers, tell you you are looking so much better to-day, and go their ways, leaving you to proceed under your own power, which is the only exercise in courage you can possibly get under these circumstances.

I was obliged to cancel my reservations on that June boat for Honolulu, but, a long way off, I still beheld dimly the vision of those Islands, East of East! The fingers of my mind still reached for the wild lilies blooming where Stevenson sleeps on top of that mountain somewhere in the Samoan Islands. And my imagination continued to dwell upon the brush lands of Australia. Queer about that; if I had gone to Australia, I should probably never have got beyond the

corporation limits of her civilization. But whenever you contemplate visiting any country with a single primitive human feature left, your mind seizes upon that — as for years after the Civil War every New-Englander who came South had a pop-eyed curiosity about negroes, and a sort of altruistic passion for making them worse — if he could. I had no such maudlin desire to pet an Australian bushman, but I did want to find out what color he is, tall or short, whether he has straight or kinky hair. I have seen only a few statues in the nude and I could not help wondering if bushmen went about clad in a few switches or blades of grass.

I could not deny that my heart was in a very bad condition, and, for the sake of argument, I was willing to agree with the doctors that it would never be a good one again hitting regularly on both cylinders; but who could prove that it had not been in practically the same condition for the last fifteen years! During this period I had made two trips abroad, including four months spent in the war zone in France in 1914. I had written twenty-three books, managed a farm, and endured great tribulations. Therefore it seemed to me highly probable that I might still spend the last months of this holy year in Rome, going around with my Protestant fingers crossed receiving spiritual inspiration from the Catholics. Mussolini would no doubt have become even more interesting, which was forecasting the weather of his fame wisely. Not that I claim any credit for that: he is due to grow more and more thrilling until he goes out in some kind of burst of glory. The setting sun may be more inspiring, but a man is always more impressive as he approaches the noonday of his fame. After that the shadows of his mortal weak-

nesses and limitations fall across the horizon and obscure his glory. I was for computing Mussolini as he approached the zenith of his power. He was prolonging his morning longer than most of us expected and I might still arrive in time to behold the zenith of his flaming powers.

There was nothing wrong about the process of reasoning by which I reached these satisfactory conclusions. It was sound, logical, and covered the situation back and front. The trouble was with the premises. It always is. We cannot think according to our point of view of the facts. So I am telling you that no man's merely rational conclusions are trustworthy. His logic is colored and directed in spite of him by what he wants to prove. If you arrive where you really belong at last, you have got to take a jump through the spiritual hoop of your imagination, regardless of your little rational faculties. I have some agility at this business, but lying upon my bed at Santa Barbara, very weak and sorely oppressed by that sword of pain in my breast, I was reduced to doing the best I could according to the lower rational method of predicting my immediate future.

III

SANTA BARBARA is a beautiful miniature city which lies in the bottom of one of these green chalices so frequently to be found in the West upon the shores of the Pacific Ocean, tilted, wide open to the sea, and cupped in on all other sides by the descending slopes of those rose- and lavender-colored mountains which appear to have herded in there from the desert. It is splendidly populated with ex-prominent people — famous jurists, doctors, artists, architects, and ambassadors — all in the past tense of gold and leisure. And it is completely garrisoned around the top with millionaires. Their palaces crown every height like pastel castles painted in the air. They seem to swim and swing in a mist of glory and bloom, now clear and close, now distant and dim, like faded tapestries of loveliness hung high against the Paradise walls of those amazing mountains — all dependent upon fogs rising from the sea that sweep over them like veils, lift, and are blown away, dried out in the hot winds from the desert.

The impression is that of the high habitation of gods. But we do not seem to make good as gods. No matter how near we come to imitating celestial scenery, we remain dingily mortal to the last. To me there was something touching about these intensely rich people who live along the skyline above Santa Barbara. I do not know whether it was because they lacked the cultural background indicated by their pomp and circumstance, or if it is the effect of great wealth to simplify men and reduce them to their native elements, desires, and in-

stincts, but it is certain that they were amateurs in living, with the most archaic and absurd ideas about the pursuit of happiness.

They must be philanthropic; they must play polo and golf. They have no choice about these; but, in addition to these obligations imposed by the creed of public cupidity and the social customs of the class to which they belong, nearly every one of them indulges in some side line for his own private diversion. One man whose mansion stands on a high bluff above the sea has developed an aquatic mind on account of this circumstance and has built in a staircase of lakes on the other side from the top to the bottom of his estate. That is to say, the effect upon his imagination of a whole ocean pitching waves behind him suggested nothing but more water to be let in at fabulous expense in front of him, although that entailed the destruction of a noble piece of natural scenery. He was a brilliant and successful man in the business of achieving wealth, but the moment he could gratify his desires, he betrayed an insular mind with a duck's imagination for domesticated water.

I heard of one millionaire who kept two fighting cock ostriches — the sublimated effects of wealth upon his normal rooster fighting instincts. Still another, who retains his little boy passion for the zoo and circus tents, keeps a menagerie of jungle beasts. There is also one with a pious turn for tyranny who specializes in morals and amusements for other people. He owns a famous island pleasure resort. This place is chaperoned by a coast guard of stern-visaged men whose business it is to make sure of the virtuous attributes of all guests before they are permitted to land.

It is the same as having a certificate of good character to be admitted to this island. And while I would not go so far as to intimate that every man and woman in the West has enjoyed this distinction, those whom I met took pains to claim it. I dared not risk the adventure, not so much because I am of a modest temperament morally, but I felt some kind of inherent delicacy about being examined by a bearded coast guard of virtues as to my qualifications along that line. What would be the nature of his questions? Thus, as many times as I was asked if I had been to this place, I evaded the real issue involved by saying in a faint voice that my health would not permit me to take the voyage. I do not know whether any one believed me, since the island lies very close to the mainland with not a wave knee-high in the waters between.

Still some authors do make it. I know of one who has his summer home there, an impeccably good man who is famous for his blood-letting imagination in fiction. I am not complaining of this apparent partiality, but merely setting it down as a psychological wonder — that there is nothing reprehensible even in the most strictly guarded social centers against committing four or five murders a day on paper that in real life would call for capital punishment. As a matter of fact, he should be regarded as a philanthropist in fiction, since he furnishes so much bloodthirsty copy by which law-abiding people may vicariously enjoy the murderous instincts we all have.

Authors of erotic fiction furnish similar service to many respectable readers. Nobody has yet raised the question about what would happen in real life if no scandals were printed or dramatized. And I do not

suppose the issue will ever be made. Still, I am wondering if the abolishment of the red-light district in fiction would not be attended by even graver consequences than those said to follow when similar districts are cleaned up in great cities. There the consequences would be local, but in fiction the effects would be practically universal upon all classes of society. Personally, I am heartily in favor of making the experiment, not only for the good of the reader in general, but also for the sake of a few humorous reflections it might afford to observe the disconcerted, poverty-stricken look of the very good, few of whom ever realize how much their virtues and pieties are nourished by the knowledge they get of other people's sins, in and out of fiction.

But, returning to those millionaires who live so splendidly around the top of Santa Barbara — they are, so far as I know, the only ones in captivity. The people in the town below have them under admirable control. They use them unflinchingly for the glory and profit of their own community. If they want a large and splendidly equipped hospital, they pick on one of their millionaires for the gift — and get it. The same method is used when they decide to have erected, in a green glade beyond the town, a theater of Grecian architecture with Ionic marble columns. They have provided their little city with parks, museums, libraries, and a fine arts academy, simply by levying tribute upon these docile rich men. In return, they love and cherish them. This is the one place I have ever known where wealth is idealized and the victims of it are free from the meanly adverse criticisms of the less prosperous. Nothing is ever said about their childish

diversions. On the contrary, what you may call the adult citizens of the town take kindly notice of these, as grown-ups humor children by praising their pets and pin-wheels without descending to their mental level. Thus, Santa Barbara keeps her capitalists strictly segregated, using them as an endowment, and meets them only in executive session when something else is needed to ennoble or beautify the town. The community itself apparently belongs to a more sedate and intellectual class. The members have many old-fashioned English customs, like afternoon tea, whether you drop in or not, and they never make a ruthless display of wealth in the matter of entertaining. The women seem to choose the fashion of their clothes from the elder best romances, not stylish, but producing the dim effects of gentleness, goodness, and sentimentality. (I refer, of course, to the older women, for at this time I had not seen the younger generation in action.) They have a cordial smoothness of manner which is restful and kind, but never intimate. They have an enormous technical vocabulary concerning art, music, flowers, and literature which they use without affectation. To me, it was a trifle disconcerting, coming as I do from a section where we have no endowments from complacent millionaires for spreading the refinements of life. Their spiritual background is mysterious, because they rarely use the words of piety or of faith, which was even more disconcerting to me, who derived most of my figurative vocabulary from scriptural sources. I suffered conversationally from the feeling that it would be indelicate to refer too casually to Moses or the prophets, especially in the presence of Episcopalians, whom I instinctively felt predominated

among those who visited me, and who impressed me as being among the loveliest-minded Christians I have ever met.

In this connection I may as well make a confession and have done with it: socially speaking, I have always been a sort of blunderbuss. Many a time I have literally killed a light and pleasant conversation by letting off an unexpected charge of buckshot ideas. Not because I had any more sense than the other people present who have been startled into silence by this discharge, but simply because I have never been able to master the fine and beautiful art of conversation, though I have really tried to do so. I have studied music, for example; not the theory nor the harmony of notes, but the conversation. For I have observed that some of the dullest people on this earth can discuss music as if it was nothing more than the botany of sounds, easily taken apart and analyzed one note at a time. They have no music of ideas, no rhythm of words, no feeling of exaltation about it, yet for hours they can talk about music in tones of authority. Why do they do it? To me this is a humiliating mystery, especially in view of the fact that I am emotionally so sensitive to music that I was near to shouting the first time I attended grand opera in Berlin years ago. Only the decorum of that audience, so learned in music, and the feeling of being a stranger in a far country, restrained me.

I was up against an even more difficult proposition in Santa Barbara, though not so stirring, emotionally speaking. Many of the ladies who visited me appeared to hold up-and-doing scholarships in their fine arts academy. If they had been contented to discuss art

historically as we all know how to do in the women's clubs at home, I might have trusted my lisping, stammering tongue with a few well-chosen reflections on Leonardo da Vinci, or said something queer about Luini's Madonna, but when it came to a passionate contention that sometimes raged among them about the technical difficulties of carving a cocktail tray out of the butt of a young redwood tree, I was at my wits' end and practiced the modesty of silence.

If this was the cultural quality of a community populated by mere laymen of the arts, what, I asked myself, must be the situation at Carmel-by-the-Sea, where the human rudiments of all kinds of literary art hibernate the year around? I resolved not to go there, on account of a sort of idiotic respect I feel for those who know more than I do about the things I do not want to know. This is a delicate point, but it requires horse sense to make it. It is safer to enjoy the literary fruits of such geniuses than to take the chance of a personal encounter with any of them.

'Cousin Tom' appeared serially in the 'Saturday Evening Post' while I was in the West. It is a story of ineffable charm, the innocence, beliefs, and mysticism of girl childhood prolonged and interpreted with a whimsical ideality not surpassed by anything James Barrie ever wrote. But it seemed too great a risk to meet the author after reading it. I prefer to think of Elijah ascending in his chariot of fire to knowing the grumbling old seer he must have been on the ground, and I prefer to think of Harry Leon Wilson as the creator of that enchanting little girl to meeting him face to face, and maybe discovering that he is a fat, bald-headed man with the usual mortal perversities of

a mere writer. The best authors should be read, not known. Even if a poet has written an epic, one hour's association with him may destroy the most idolatrous reader's illusion of him. Your favorite humorist may turn out to be an ordinary person, dull in the use of the spoken word. Or, what you believe to be the greatest living novelist may prove to be a little peevish man whose false teeth do not fit, made intolerant by nervous indigestion or egotism. (I have heard that Arnold Bennett went around for years among his admirers with one front tooth missing, which was an atrocious travesty upon his own art, if you want to know what I think.) In any case some writer whom you have admired for his high notes in the purpling shadows of a great poem is almost sure to give vent to some meanly critical views of men quite contrary to the noble sentiments he bugled in that martial epic, because he was in a divine mood when he wrote it, and the thing merely interprets his mood, not his normal mind, which may be a mean little mind.

The same precaution should be taken toward really great men and women who actually measure up in character to their noble achievements. It is safer to admire them at a distance. Personally, I am rarely attached to one of them. They are all very well in their proper place as heroes, statesmen, artists, and inventors, but they are out of drawing with the rest of us. Why seek the sensations of an inferiority complex by meeting one of them? Just let a little renown stick to a man, and right then I eschew him as an unsuitable person for the happier relations of life. He may have started out with the best intentions, he may say in the glory of his fine emotions that he will draw all men to

him when he is lifted up, but he will do no such thing. He will be knocking them off his back, thrusting their mendicant hands aside. He will be forced to avoid predatory people and barnacle friends and many more with the inferiority complex who want to be 'mixed up with him before the public.' If he has written one successful book he will be dodging the literary lady who wants his opinion about the little spider web of poetry she has written.

In short, the very circumstances and conditions attendant upon fame compel him to become brutal in self-defense.

I am partially famous myself, with the usual human streak of infamy widening in me on this account. I have almost a child's gift for loving my fellow women and some of my fellow men, but I am pale at the memory of the things I have been obliged to do in order to preserve my strength, substance, and some semblance of dignity from those people who have been too easily drawn to me, not by affection, or respect, but by the desire for more assistance than it is wise or possible to give. They are never to be confounded with the infinitely greater number of those whose faith and appreciation have sustained me through many years of hard work. But every successful person, whether in literature or commerce, knows the mendicant group to which I refer. The difference is that they are too discreet to complain of them as I am doing. But I am giving it to you straight — avoid being drawn by your own inefficiency close enough to your favorite author, hero, or capitalist to impose your rejected copy on the one or to attempt to borrow money or prestige from the others.

Very few authors publish magazines, and if they did they would fill them with their own copy. None of us have any influence with editors for placing other people's copy, not nearly so much as we need in fact to get by with our own. We are the real mendicants perpetually dependent upon your approval for success. Most of us are tired out and preoccupied with the effort to win some kind of fortune, thankful as the humblest for any man's praise, but not nearly so interesting personally as the characters we create or the ideas we promulgate. The dullest woman I have ever met in real life has written some of the wittiest books, but I never could take the same pleasure in reading them after seeing her sit a whole evening like a purple wall flower in a delightful gathering of ordinary men and women. Very few of us prove up according to expectations. One of the most beloved novelists in this country is never her dearer self unless she is with working girls, which is all to her credit. But what hurt me was that she did not recognize me as a poor old working girl myself and literally snubbed the puppy-licking smile of intense admiration off my face the only time I ever met her. You cannot blame a virtuous woman like that who is positively steaming with good works and noble sentiments. The only thing to do is to admire her and avoid her.

Quite without intention to deceive we produce false impressions of the men and women we really are. Consider the case of another popular author. Probably no writer, living or dead, has committed so many murders with his pen in the effort to produce healthy, red-blooded fiction. His literary style photographs him as a two-gun man shooting both ways at once with deadly

aim. As a matter of fact he is no such person. He looks like a college professor carrying a book under his arm, and, say, a myth in the other hand — anything fragile, such as a butterfly net. He has indeed a masculine countenance, designed by nature to be rugged, but it is overcast with a sweetness of expression singularly like that of a gentlewoman. Never a word falls from his lips about outlaws, savages, desert thirst, or violent deaths. If you attempt to draw him into the literary fray of firearms with some reference to sawed-off shotguns, he is apt to lead you back to 'The Lady of Shalott' by quoting a singing passage from that maidenly poem.

We are all more or less bloodthirsty, not so much by nature as by imagination, and this man was so much milder, so completely purged of the violence which is the dominant characteristic of his books, that I was shocked to the very pangs of disappointment when I met him. I had known, of course, that I should not like an armed, desert-dust-crusted author, but I longed to behold one, as the meekest woman would rather shiver at the sight of a roaring lion than meet a lamb in a flowering meadow.

I am one of the most beloved unpopular writers in this country and frequently receive invitations from readers who want to love and cherish me in their homes. But I deny myself the pleasure of accepting any of them lest I should fail as a guest to measure up to the copy that inspired the invitation.

Shortly after 'As a Woman Thinks' appeared in the 'Saturday Evening Post' came a curiously blunt but affectionate letter from a Canadian engineer, such a letter as a kind-hearted man might write to his

widowed grandmother. He wanted me to come up and spend the winter with him and his two companions, also engineers. They lived, he told me, in a log cabin on top of a high mountain. The road leading to it was so rough that I would be obliged to make the last upward lap of the journey on a 'surefooted mule.' My quaking private opinion was that, if I survived the ascent, some very stout person or team of persons must perform a miracle to get me down. For never would I trust a 'surefooted mule' to make such a perilous descent at my age, to say nothing of my weight and natural terror of high places. What about the knees of that mule? The engineer had not recommended the strength of these joints, and it would be the quality of his knees that would count in this emergency!

But that dear young man was touchingly anxious that I should come and spread his allurements over several pages. He and his companions had been in this cabin a long time. They were engaged in blasting a railroad tunnel somewhere below through the bowels of this same mountain. There was a large living-room with a huge fireplace. This would be my quarters. All he asked was that when they returned from their labors in the evening they might find a good, kind, gray-haired woman sitting before the fire. They felt the need of a mother in their house, and so on and so forth.

I could not go. After being rocked so frightfully by those 'tremors' of the earth in California even my brazen courage blenched at the thought of hibernating on top of a mountain daily riven by explosives beneath me. But I still believe that might have been a happy adventure in happiness for me. My two sons died in their infancy, and I missed the distinction of

being a mother of men. What airs I should have given myself fussing over these lonely youngsters who were about the age my sons would have been.

However, I was too considerate to take advantage of their credulity. They had gained their impression of me from the exposure I made of my heart in the books I write, and they were too inexperienced to know that the pure in heart frequently have difficult dispositions.

Lately I saw this half-sentence photograph of me in a book written by an honest man who has actually seen me in the flesh — '. . . At times smiles would play over her face, then she would drop into a cynical mood without warning and her face take on a hard and stony look.' Ah! my dears, to be subject by inheritance to a 'hard and stony look' when never in my life have I had the thoughts that accompany such an expression! So you will not find the pen scratch of it in any of my works. It is really a physical quotation of features Nature has made against me from certain barbed-minded ancestors.

But who can predict the deflation of ideality in the breasts of those Canadian engineers if I had arrived wearing such a look when they were expecting to welcome a dear little old lady whose face had been softly crimped with wrinkles of sweetness. Can you imagine a stout, elderly woman misquoted in her very face by a pair of wide-open, deep-seated sardonic eyes, climbing an exceedingly high mountain to take charge of three young men still in their romping thirties, with no more recommendations for the part they expected me to play than those mere books of love and tenderness I have written?

What a stew I should have made in that cabin when

I really got going! Although there is little indication of the fact in any of my published works, I am a vehement and tyrannical housekeeper, despising dust and all forms of masculine disorder. Bachelors would have fought hard for their liberties under these conditions. They might have turned out to be cordial-minded drinking men, while I am intolerant about liquor for men, although in my own case I follow Paul's injunction to Timothy and take a teaspoonful every two or three years for my stomach's sake. But this is different. I am dependable at this point because I am a woman, and not subject to that inferiority complex which leads so many men to exalt themselves in their own estimation by the false stimulation of liquors. If the worse comes to the worst, the only thing I have ever had to do is to give a man an estimating look from my point of view in order to feel sufficiently exalted. The upshot of my bigotry would have been that those young men would have been reduced in no time to sneaking around behind their own cabin to take a drink when they had always indulged openly in their transgressions like honorable men.

What I mean is that authors are not what they seem to be. And nothing we ever write is so romantically divorced from the truth of what we really are as the notions the readers get of our sweetness and light merely by reading the copy we produce. We are difficult. We are friends who are obliged to forget you and cast you out on account of the urgent demands of our own affairs. Therefore, I repeat, if you wish to preserve your ideals of us, keep away from us. Even the best stars overhead seem bright only in the reflected glory of the sun. They have no light of their

own. Neither have we. You are our light, and your faith is our glory.

I cannot tell what might have happened if I had arrived as an able-bodied traveler at Santa Barbara. As it was, I made good there. The explanation probably was this — when you are ill and must lie flat on your back, your limitations of mind and manners are not so apparent as they may be when you are up and abroad on your feet with sufficient vigor and animus to dramatize yourself according to your perversities and opinions. I do not suppose the good Samaritan who picked up the sick man on his way to Jericho gave a moment's thought as to whether the poor soul was a scholar and a gentleman. He was concerned only to give him first aid and provide for his recovery. I fared the same way in that community. If any one knew or suspected me of having written a book, I was neither accused nor praised for the performance. My stock as a human being was not inflated by any of the fictitious values attendant upon fame. I had pleasant little things done to me as good people minister to a sadly damaged stranger who has come down unexpectedly within their gates. I was so frequently complimented, for example, on my personal appearance that I felt like a raving beauty weeks before I was able to endure the shock of contemplating my same old image in the mirror. However it may be with other women, I am peculiarly sensitive to this kind of flattery. I can believe any pleasant thing said about my features or expression. I have such a craving for loveliness that there has not been a day within the last thirty years when I would not have gladly exchanged

half of my virtues and all of my fame merely to be beautiful and have that grace of lovely women who can wave a fan, tap the world prettily on the shoulder, and be adored. I have often been respected, sometimes honored, but all of it put together does not come to quite the same thing as being adored. There is power in it which a woman never exercises in any other way. I am not praising Helen of Troy, you understand. I still disapprove of her in spite of John Erskine's recent glorified interpretation of her 'private life,' but I am calling your attention to the fact that it was Helen's beauty, not her virtues, that launched a thousand ships. On the other hand, consider the case of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. She was a nice woman and wrote very good poetry, but so long as a single stanza of it lives, she will be remembered as a homely woman — an awful fate when all is said that can be said in praise of her verse. The idea I am endeavoring to set forth is that we shall never get the best of these Helens, nor enjoy their prestige until we learn how to be as beautiful as we are good. And spiritually speaking I have always striven in that direction with the hope that when my corruption finally does put on incorruption and my body is raised a spiritual body, it will be an enchantingly beautiful one. I do hope there is no harm in such a wish.

Anyway, I lay upon the sunny side of all hearts about me in Santa Barbara, from Episcopalian saints and downright delightful sinners to Christian Scientists. The latter were obliged to practice 'absent treatments' on my behalf due to my intolerance, not of them, but of their creed. They were not remiss in their benefits on this account. I can only hope that

my steady improvement was strictly in accordance with the best allopathic doctrines and not connected with their kind but heretical interference.

I recall an amusing incident in this connection. One day late in May, when I was at last convalescent, two fine ladies came to take me for a drive.

I was not only glad to get out, but I was also anxious for an opportunity to go in town to choose a few artificial accessories for making a better complexion, and more particularly to purchase a small bottle of castor oil. My physician had entertained what appeared to me groundless prejudices against this remedy in case of extreme cardiac misery, but he had dismissed me and I was for providing myself as soon as possible with this medicine I always keep in threatening reserve when I am responsible for my own well-being.

Now I am as psychic as any other normal animal to the abnormal, and no sooner was I seated between my two elegant companions in that lovely car than I began to feel psychic; that is to say, obstructed by some power foreign to me. They pitched the conversation a trifle high and held it there in spite of my clearest efforts to lower it to the plainer circumstances of real life, as if they were accustomed to dwelling in a state of rarefied happiness and could not come down. I endeavored to elevate my spirit into fellowship with their gladder spirits only to find myself growing fallacious mentally, lying, you understand, in a sort of hysteria of politeness, especially about the way I felt — perfectly well and strong, I remember telling them!

Meanwhile, I was privately scanning the street for a drug store. When we came in sight of one, however, I remained too mysteriously polite to say simply that

I wished to get out and go in to make some purchases. 'Mysterious' is the word to use in this connection because there was nothing intelligible in the way I went on being courteous to some unknown influence. We must have passed a dozen drug stores, while the same strange deference to the company I was keeping prevented me from making my wishes known.

Thus we motored gladly through the town and out upon the long country road. For the next hour I carried on an absurd struggle, working myself up to the determination to stop at the first drug store we came to on the way home. It was like going up against bright powers that omitted an unthinkable something important to me. We passed the same apothecary shops upon our return, my companions maintaining their same combined spirit of sweetness, health, and light, although by this time I had fallen silent and a bit choleric, wondering what kind of seizure this was that had deprived me of my will power to stop and do what I wanted to do.

Later I learned that one of the women was a 'practitioner' and the other was her patient!

If I had only thought to say that I wanted cold cream and face powder, nothing tyrannical could have happened, for both of their faces were highly medicated with pink-and-white cosmetics. What confounds me to this day is how they discovered that my mind was really dwelling on the castor oil so that every time my eye fastened on a prospective drug store they lifted the conversation a peg higher and passed on, you may say, over my failing spirit.

The joke was on me, of course. They had acted according to their creed with good will, but in my worse

moments I still have my suspicions of the ethics of any creed which is secretly imposed upon another. And I wonder how the most intolerant Protestant can inveigh against the secrecies and subtleties of Roman Catholicism after he has run up against the clairvoyance and hypnotism of Christian Scientists.

But after all is said, we are bound to admit that tyranny and intolerance are the strongest qualities we have for the propagation of any religious faith. Whatever else we concede in the way of liberty, we never grant religious liberty. The revolt against the abuses of Roman Catholicism cast us into the complexities of Protestantism, but did not end the persecution of each other's saints. Our spiritual characteristics appear no less dangerous than our carnal instincts. 'Only one belief is essential to a liberal, belief in the other man's right to his own belief,' is a worthy sentiment, but it will not work out with the proper moral shine. We cannot afford to grant so much religious liberty as that without committing a crime against society and humanity quite as bad as burning a few martyrs at the stake. We have been obliged to censor the Mormon faith because it conceded nineteen wives to a prophet in a Christian civilization which has outgrown Old Testament polygamy. The Christian Scientists on the Board of Education in Los Angeles are said to be engaged in an effort to abolish medical inspection of school children, because they do not believe in medicine, not because all the children are healthy. On the other hand, we sue a man who permits his child to die of diphtheria rather than send for a doctor, when his religious creed forbids him to do so.

With all the getting of wisdom from age to age we

do not seem to get the right understanding. It is not belief in God, but in our notions of God, which makes us inhuman, so that at last we have raised up a school of the most intolerant fanatics ever seen upon the earth. These are the rationalists who oppose all religious dogmas as being either superstitious or unscientific. The churches are the fathers and mothers of these people. For ages their priests and preachers have practiced upon the fears of men. They have hidden the very face of God in the folds of mortal theology. They have made sentimental uses of great truths which have to do with the law and principles of a good life rather than with the mere emotions. They have meant well, more particularly in favor of their own competitive creeds. They have shed the best light we have upon the way of life; just so much, however, and no more. They have fostered education, only to face about when men actually learn how to think, and now they are endeavoring to forbid by law the publishing of any knowledge which widens their own narrower vision of the Almighty and His creation. What distinction is there between this intolerance and that, say, of the Catholics, who are so severely condemned by the Protestants because they are said to forbid the reading of the whole Bible by their members? The earth and the fullness thereof also publish the will of God. Why should we not be allowed to study the science of that until we can translate the very stories of His glory? Otherwise, we have only one little book of His Word, which has come down to us shadowed and changed by the medium of mortal men's minds — at best, it is barely enough to go by in the spirit, very dark to us uninspired. His will is written also in the earth, from

the tops of the tallest mountains to the depths of the deepest seas, in records that have never been changed. I am for digging it all up from the earliest bone to the first script signs of the morning and evening of the first day washed down by floods, but still legible in these hidden tombs of time. This is something more than the King James Version has to tell. Nothing can possibly be discovered which, when understood, denies the power and goodness of God; only that he was not a denominational deity, not a one-man Providence. And that is the crux of the whole matter!

Why do some of us take the name of 'Fundamentalists' to distinguish ourselves in an un-Christian row from those who call themselves 'Modernists' for the same purpose? All that remains now of the only modern man that ever existed is a few fragments of a skull and jawbone, far from complimentary specimens by all accounts. We are all fairly ancient by this time and somewhat improved. The only difference I can see between us is that the Fundamentalists wear that title like a long-tailed coat cut according to their theology to distinguish themselves from their adversaries, the Modernists, who wear nothing upon their minds in childish imitation of the earliest and real Modernist from whom we have all descended — some decency in that, to be sure, but not much.

There is no sense in trying to prove the existence of God any more than in wasting words to prove the existence of the sun, moon, and stars. They who do it lack the nobler courage to welcome every discovery of science as confirmation of their faith. They betray themselves as being a little doubtful about God after all. A word like 'evolution' stirs them into a religious

frenzy which is not religious. They want laws passed to keep school children from finding out that Adam was not the first man, when they know that the record in Genesis distinctly proves that he was not the first man. What they should do is to revise their catechisms.

It is no use to back down and stem the tide. This world is growing up at last, and we are determined to know God. We are inspired, if you get my meaning, and we are resolved to have the share of truth we earn about Him and His works from age to age.

These opinions, however, are not offered in defense of the professional rationalists, who are the most presumptuous of all bigots with the least excuse for their pretensions. They do not know much; nobody can know very much. The worst that can be charged against religious bigots is their lack of judgment and tyrannies in dealing with the souls of men, and that many of them are not so heroic mentally as their great profession of faith demands; but I never knew a Christian minister who was a physical coward or who would not lay down his life in defense of his faith. But there is something wittily scampish in the attitude of the ablest rationalist toward life. His intellectual dignity is a pose; there is nothing in the man's character to justify it. To be merely intellectual is no more creditable than for a fool to wear a scholar's cap and gown. No folds, however classically arranged, can conceal what he really is from the discerning eye. Yet the rationalist's methods of persecution are embarrassing, contemptible, and very effective. I have found him without exception to be an egotist and subtly diminishing to my own purely spiritual vanities without showing a cor-

responding excellence of quality to justify the way he balls me up in a mere argument. On the contrary, these people show a strange unscrupulousness of mind and conduct damaging to society. They have a noble use of words with no reason in their philosophy for being noble about anything. For one of them to act generously, make such sacrifices as faithful men make, is for him to act illogically. He has no better reason for doing good than merely to show off. If he is chaste or honest, he is simply a plagiarist of chastity and honor. The real stuff is not in him. His theories of life are predatory. If he cannot steal your money or your wife, he writes a book or delivers a lecture in the noblest words that teaches you how to do these things with a sort of gallant lack of compunction.

The only way I ever discovered to confound one of these smart Alecks was to give him his head until he had spelled God with a little 'g' in the conversation, proved conclusively that there is no such thing as spiritual values, and set up the materialistic formula of his philosophy. Then, skipping all his splendid logic, I would stick his snorting, sneering intellectual nose up against the first three words of Genesis, 'In the beginning,' and ask him like a simple old thing where and when was the beginning, how much did Nature have to start on before even Nature was, and where did it come from? I remember yet the look of contempt he cast upon me. The impression he conveyed was that it was folly to try to enlighten a fool. Ask him a sensible question; don't quote him a phrase from Jewish folklore! Having a finite mind he was obliged to concede that there must have been a beginning, though, if he practiced a little more imagination than any man's rational

faculties afford, he might have answered that there could have been no beginning where there was no conceivable ending. But it was not for me to help him out. I just sat down there by the Big Gate of Genesis in my old Sabbath-School mind and watched him paw infinity. His processes of thought started some millions of æons farther out in time after the light was divided from the dark and the A, B, C's of the stars had been written in the heavens. Then he went ahead like a flash, assuming, you may say, an anonymous beginning, and claiming a sort of scientific title to matter.

He was truly a learned man and it was pretty to hear him giving the history of substance, the fable of life starting, deriving and naming all the elements of matter. He was as clever about that as Adam was about naming all the beasts of the fields at one sitting. But when he had spent hours making this second arduous tramp up through the processes of creation, with me listening patiently, I was mean enough to remind him that he had not accounted for that first atom of dust he had rolled so successfully through space, gathering other atoms until it became a sizable planet. I asked him where he got it, who was the author and creator of it.

I was not making fun of him, you understand, any more than he was trifling with me when he asked me what I really meant when I quoted the famous definition of faith from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews — 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' But I am merely saying in plain words that if you scratch a scientist who is also a rationalist, you will find a nature faker who lacks the

sublime imagination necessary to become a spiritual realist in the name of the Lord.

Ben Ames Williams was right — it is imagination that turns the hinges of doors forever closed to mere mind (though I am not sure that Mr. Williams meant his compliment to the swifter uses of the imagination to be used in this connection!). It is some kind of wireless faculty of us, not checked by the slower processes of reason, quicker than instinct, keener than any of our senses. This is the reason why I stick to that sublime definition of faith — 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' It is so vastly indefinite, and forever relieves our pygmy minds from the necessity of visualizing the very sack-coat of immortality! I have no more idea of what the soul is than of what God is, beyond the fact that I am conscious of both as the 'evidence of things not seen.'

I used to think with considerable animosity about these rationalists during those first weeks at Santa Barbara, when I lay so near in consciousness to just my dust, troubled by the suggestions they have sown in braver minds than my own. What if after all my body should not be raised a spiritual body? — not that I ever really hankered after that kind of incandescence, but when your breath gets very short, and you have a pain in your breast that makes the sweat pop out on your forehead like death dew, any kind of body seems better than none at all.

Men and women are dying all the time, and sometimes they know it. They are alone in the dark terrors of their flesh, even if others are present. It is singularly mean to deprive them of the only consolation they can have in this emergency simply for the pleasure you

may have in skinning the cat on your own wits. There is nothing reprehensible or degrading about believing in God and eternal life. More human history has been elevated by doing so than the rationalists will ever make.

I remember little scenes I used to have with myself very far off there in the warm California night, when I left the good God to His own affairs, forgave the rationalists, forgot the happy pilgrimage, and was near to becoming a poet in my own rights if only I could have hit upon the proper pentameter for scanning the mortal pulse.

Some youngster with a spiritual swagger wrote a sapphic ode to the Archangel Michael, nearly five hundred years ago, which was very creditable to him, though I do not remember that he lived up to that kind of divine afflatus afterward; but no man yet has written so much as an invocation to the human heart, by which I do not mean the romantic figure of speech, 'the heart of love and emotion,' but I refer to that physical organ which assumes us and begins to beat before we are born or know the sweet breath of life, and never rests or ceases to beat until the last breath is drawn. Why is it no one has ever paid tribute to this poet in the human breast which sets to rhythm all our days and measures every hour without skipping the fraction of a second? I used to keep company with mine all night as you do with a brave comrade on a long hard march, and fall into a perfect trance of admiration toward daybreak and sleep off the excitement and terrors of the journey we made together. We are all pilgrims, my dears, so long as this traveler in our breast keeps step, making the grade whether we think we can make it or not, seeing

us through, unmindful of our craven fears, the very hero of all flesh. After one of these hard fights I used to think of mine as a sort of Lady Michael heart, not kin to me, but more valorous, derived somehow from the bright rim of great poetry.

IV

WRITING an autobiography is at best very much like weaving a luminous veil with which to soften your harsher features. You may work into it your sublimer prejudices and more valorous thoughts without giving any very distinct impression of the human being you still are beneath these bright blandishments: so much of actual living is contradictory to the good things and even the bad things you can tell about it.

Precisely so, you may recall that one of the top notches of the preparations I made for starting out upon this pilgrimage of emancipation was that I left my Scriptures behind me. My idea was that I had made living unnecessarily hard by going back too frequently to the Copy Book of the Almighty's will and word to try myself out by the fiercer gospels. I was not all spirit. I had spent fifty years endeavoring to produce an honorable human being in the flesh, and it seemed to me that I had become too dependent upon the directions of my Heavenly Father, as grown-up sons and daughters sometimes remain disgracefully beholden to their parents. I was for coming of age, so to speak; going off into the world to try out the person I really was, weak or strong, without praying or fasting or being suspicious enough to take tests in the Beatitudes in order to find out how I was progressing.

Naturally I was not counting upon being laid by the heels for nearly two months at Santa Barbara. My plan was to whisk brightly from one continent

THE CABIN FROM THE CATHEDRAL OF PINES, IN THE VALLEY

to another and to do every single thing I wanted to do.

The Lord Himself never prepared a shrewder test for one of His strongest saints! The only result of which I can boast is that I did not develop the grumbling egotism of Job and give myself airs about holding fast to my 'integrity.' A man covered with boils has very little chance in nature to damage his integrity. The worst one I ever knew was suddenly bereaved of all his temptations by the loss of the use of his legs. It was astonishing how rapidly he grew in grace. His brilliant intellect flowered into a sort of holy eloquence that moved the most practical saints to admiration.

I had already received some inklings of our Greater God by figuring out why the rain falls alike upon the just and the unjust, not regardless of me, but grandly regardful of the whole order of things in nature, in favor of all life — a characteristic of every great law, made without favoritism to the individual.

Therefore, if I had got a bad heart by transgressing the laws of health, it was of no use to fash myself about it. The sensible prayer of penitence to pray was to lie still, endeavor to recover and join the procession of happier adventurers in living as soon as possible. I can be as rational as any one, if you concede me the Almighty as a premise. Even so I cannot claim that I was always capable of this highly intellectual grandiloquence toward Providence. There were times at night, when I could not sleep for pain and loneliness, when I dropped all this camouflaging and craved a more intimate Heavenly Father. More than once I remember in an anguish of restlessness folding my hands and giving way to my earliest remembered petition:

Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

The strongest of us do these little foolish things in the dark before the Lord. I suppose there is some provision in the great law of His mercies to cover these weaknesses. Anyway, I used to get by with that infantile prayer sometimes and did fall asleep. The trouble was that at other times it did not work.

This was late in May, as I remember, before the earthquake at Santa Barbara in June. Now and then the little cottage where I lay used to have rigors in the deeper, darker hours of the night. The floor beneath my bed seemed to buck and undulate with a sickening motion. The windows would rattle for the briefest moment, like the teeth of a horse chattering. But when I reached up, turned on the light, and looked gingerly over the side of the bed, the floor would be smooth, the windows steady as clear eyes above the rolling tides of the ocean beyond. But I could not get over feeling popeyed. I might then have recited every prayer litany known to man, in vain. So far as I have been able to discover, there are no specific directions in the Scriptures about how to calm ourselves when the very earth beneath you seems to turn over and shake its foot in a bad dream. My feeling is that it is not so much a 'flaw in the earth' as it is a flaw in the order of things; it is a positive manifestation of disorder there, showing that not even the most substantial work of His hands is perfect. And I am sufficiently rational to take what license I need to cover my flaws by observing the patience with which the Almighty works out this in the great

plan. A star must behave very badly indeed before it is snatched from its orbit and cast into the shimmering dust heap of the universe. And the most righteous star in the heavens has not striven harder than I have to stay in the strait and narrow way, always wishing for a broader, more circuitous route.

I do not know whether I was the only one who felt these tremors, being very imaginative and nervous at the time, or whether it was a mere coincidence, but it is a fact that more people invariably called upon me the next day. It seemed to me that they were more solicitous about how I felt, and that their manner was singularly cheerful. But never a word about that tremor of the night before. I was equally polite, having discovered that it is bad form in California to refer to these misdemeanors of the earth, as it would be to talk scandal about every man's and woman's relative there. So I reached a steady glance up to each visitor without a flicker to betray the lying coward I really was and matched their unusually sprightly conversation with my own faked gayety, probably in a fainter voice than usual, but very good stuff at that to come from the hollow tomb of my terrors. And I envied them their courage as I have rarely conceded this superiority to others.

What I have to say about the people of the West Coast in this connection is that I believe they are the bravest on this earth. Endowed with the sensitiveness and enthusiasms of youth to a degree I never imagined possible in mature men and women, they are never mastered by fears of these terrifying unnatural phenomena, but they show a dignity of silence and courage never equalled by the most valorous army going into

action. And they always go immediately into action when one of these earth disasters overtakes them. If their city is shaken down, they make haste to build another fairer city upon the ruins. They have made a garden of the desert and lifted up an invincible civilization upon a land where other races faded away. And they will be there when the last 'flaw' of the earth in that place has shaken down into firm foundations, living castles of loveliness raised by immortal faith in the light of the sun. Whatever record of their limitations these pages may contain, I have no words to express my admiration of their heroic spiritual quality.

Looking back now at the breathless invalid I was at this time, I am astonished to realize that my thoughts never wavered from the purpose I had had in the beginning of making a long pilgrimage. I was still outward bound. My mind was a ship of many sails upon a quiet sea, as day after day, I lay alone in that bright room with the tides of the ocean roaring in and out beneath my windows, with the fogs rising out of it like gray curtains enfolding me, making all things dim, with the wind of the desert blowing across purple mountains to lift the curtain and reveal again the majestic loveliness of that great golden rim of the world. It was like resting in a long furlough of dreams. Nothing to do but to go on presently; nothing else to win or lose; not much more of life to live; delivered from the fears I have always had of the weariness and loneliness of old age. The leaves from the tallest tree must fall. So be it. I felt blessed and free at last, with a long bright road to travel in the happy wind of my spirit, until some day, somewhere, the mere leaf of me would come fluttering down. I could not have been in my own

mortal senses or I should not have been so rational about death. As it was, the only things I feared were those sickening sensations of the rumpling earth. My imagination revealed to me widening cracks far below the surface, and immeasurable hollow stinking depths below these cracks filled with heat and gas. (I am telling you that the water did taste more and more of sulphur and brimstone, whatever that Old Testament stuff is!) But there were only one or two of these tremors, and since nobody admitted them I was more than half-persuaded that my own imagination had quaked beneath me. On the whole, these were days of the happiest revelations with only the briefest recurrence of pain and distress. One thing that sticks most vividly in my recollections of this period is the feeling of friendliness I enjoyed toward the people who came and went; not gratitude, not quite affection, but such artless confidence as children enjoy in their relation to others. No doubts, no questions in my mind about whether they were worthy or unworthy. I seemed only to know the goodness of their hearts, and nothing else mattered. Not since my conversion many, many years ago have I had such incontestably correct knowledge of my fellow men and women.

Therefore, I am admitting, in case your attention has already been riveted upon the fact, that some of the thinking I did then was not in keeping with the kind one is supposed to do in the sublimated state of sweetness and light. Maybe something I had read, or heard said, stirred up my old righteousness, then I would take a day off from being a placid invalid propped high on my pillows and go house-cleaning in the world at large with all the violence of a virtuous termagant.

At such times I used the pen for a broom and scribbled blasting notes of my opinions until the very sweat of morality popped out on my brow. After that a sleepless night attended by rigors of the house and severe palpitations of my own heart, would reduce me to meekness and that faint air of hallowed goodness which I am persuaded endeared me to my visiting friends the next day, they being unaware of the animosities of mind I had practiced, say, against the new school of primitives in fiction, that had reduced me to this softness of spirit.

The only way I can account for these spells is that the noble Pharisee in the humblest of us never dies. Once in so often we must get up and sweep out the faults and fallacies of other people simply by showing off to ourselves, if not to the world at large. I shall copy in some of these sweepings as soon as I have sung another Psalm or two.

No sooner was I strong enough to hold a book in my hand than I began to remember the Bible, passages in it, not those preservative ones we use for our salvation, like the Commandments and the Beatitudes, but the scenery which it contains. All of that is written with a vividness and power not found in any other literature, because it is something infinitely more than mere literature, I suppose, a majestic record of the truth from the sublime photography of creation spread out in Genesis to that luminous vision of the blind man John in Revelation, conceived, to be sure, in the gaudy terms of the Hebraic imagination, but ineffably splendid and a faithful interpretation of the substance of the last things we hope for.

Since I had opened a Bible, I had passed through a

desert, seen one of those chapters of the Old Testament of the earth written here and there upon its surface. And now I wanted to read again certain hot, dusty passages in it, as we go back and study for a long time some great masterpiece after we have seen the original from which it was painted. There are many wild scenes laid in the books of the prophets which always seemed to me unbelievably remote in time and incredibly desolate, but full of the motion and color which we are no longer able to impart to the most terrible tragedy, such as this description Habakkuk gives of 'that bitter and hasty nation,' the Chaldeans, when he was standing somewhere in his long priestly robes threatening the Jews with these marauders as a punishment sure to come upon them because of their sins. 'Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves,' he tells them, and that 'their horsemen . . . shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.' I have listened to some fairly able cursers in the name of the Lord in my day, but not one who had such a grasp upon the pigment words of disaster.

These old seers who depended upon inspiration were sublimely independent of the rules of rhetoric which enslave our best writers and speakers now. Habakkuk mixed his metaphors enough to compare horses and riders with leopards, wolves, eagles, and the east wind in the furious flash of color, ferocity, and speed as they rode across the burning sands upon their victims. And he took only a couple of sentences, composed chiefly of frightful nouns and galloping verbs, in which to paint

his picture. I do not remember that leopards are renowned for their swiftness, but you get the spots of their glistening hides, the impression of the sneaking, noiseless advance of these horsemen, from that highly effective mistake he made in the choice of a simile; the wolfish rapacity of these riders, of their garments flying like the wings of eagles descending upon their victims. And for once in your life you see men with ravenous faces coming like a wind with a thousand tongues to lick up their captives, piled 'as the sand.' The construction is bad, but who in our times can paint with the strokes of so few words a picture that will last as long?

Just so, having lain for so many days in a sort of grammatical quietness, I wanted to read words lawlessly flung together in a passion of prophecy, with that rearing, plunging gait verbs never attain in our times. I wanted to refresh my memory about Sennacherib and the fate that overtook him and his riders. Going through a desert, no matter how swiftly you travel, is like going through the immemorial past. Ages and ages lie buried there. You feel them. I had just had this experience. The brightness, the horrible stillness of the Great Western Desert lay in my memory like a hot vision. Former things, even to the beginning of all things, seemed closer to me, as if the element of time had been removed for a moment from consciousness, and I had got by the Old Testament and literally perceived the veracity of that greatest of all human dramas. My suspicion is that the impression you receive of it depends upon where you read the Bible; and that this is not the case with other books. One would not, I imagine, derive the same ideas from reading the Scrip-

tures in China, for example, as he would from studying them in Boston. I cannot imagine how it would be at the North Pole. For some strange reason I cannot associate any kind of Scriptural scenery with the Arctic regions. I recall storms enough by land and sea, but right now I do not remember much very cold weather accompanied by ice, snow, and midnight days in the Scriptures. Certainly the Adam and Abraham of the Eskimos are not mentioned. No telling, they may not have existed as early as that. They may be the stunted descendants of the Gentiles who were driven out of warmer lands in search of religious liberty.

However that may be, one afternoon a pleasant lady called on me, probably during the fourth week of my illness at Santa Barbara. Our conversation was light and cheerful, she being an Episcopalian and modesty itself, spiritually speaking. But when she was taking her leave, she asked if there was anything she could do for me. I was literally perishing by this time for a few Scriptures and I asked her if she would lend me a Bible.

'Yes, indeed!' she gasped, giving me a startled glance, meaning that she had not known I was that badly off. Then she hurried out as if I had sent her to call the doctor. Presently she returned, bringing me a brand new limber-back Bible.

I am not saying that it was not the Word of God, but it was the latest revised edition. Maybe she thought I was intelligent, progressive, or something. But really I could not bear the thing. It was printed in paragraphs, like ordinary prose. Many passages in it had been changed and clarified so that I missed the dearer old incantations of mystery they contained in my ragged old Bible at home.

Such things count in spiritual psychology. Religion is a sort of filial instinct we have based upon our sense of mortal weakness and fears. It is financed by traditions and ideals of God set forth for the most part in the text of His Word. If you meddle with the text, even to mend it, we old ones detect the difference. We smell the rat of a modern scholar's rational mind explaining away some of the supernatural significance of our Scriptures. We arrived by faith, not by rational processes, in the comforts of our religion. And it follows that some sort of spiritual violence is done to us when we are reduced to learning God again in a revised version of the history of Him and His instructions to us. It is all very well to accustom the younger generation to this later text, because their spiritual powers have been reduced by the rational training they have received, but I do think we who are older in the Word should be permitted to stick strictly to the original King James Version, which, of course, was frightfully modern when it was first published, but it has a lot of queer places, contradictions in it, which afford excellent exercise for our old childish faith in the Lord, no matter what the Bible says.

And I was not to be outdone in this matter once I had set my heart upon taking a desert-aged view of the mouthings of those elder prophets. The next day a fine old sea captain came in to pay his respects. We talked of ships and sails and life fifty years ago in the roaring main. I freshened up, as if he had been a strong salt wind blowing over me. He had a grand laugh, a raucous note in his voice, having been born in Scotland. He walked with the rocking gait of a good old ship whose timbers have begun to creak, his joints corroded, I sup-

pose, from having been exposed for so many years to salt sea weather. He told of pirates and shipwrecks, mentioned God once or twice as if his particular Almighty had been a bully boy, stirring mountain waves to try the faith of his mariners. Really, it could not have been so different from spending an hour with Frank R. Stockton in a gallant seafaring mood.

He always came in bringing a great sheaf of flowers, and when he was ready to go, he invariably asked me if there was anything else I wanted. As a rule I would say nothing else, only a few more flowers and another rip-roaring sea tale at his convenience. But this time I surprised him. I asked him if he possessed a very old Bible. He dropped his eyes as if I had asked him for a secret.

'I want a mellow, yellow-leafed, old-fashioned Bible, one printed in little short verses, in which nothing has been done to clear up the mystery of the whale swallowing Jonah, and no scientific last notes about how Jesus walked upon the waters,' I explained.

Yes, he remembered now that he had precisely that kind of Bible, he said, speaking slowly, as if he was searching mentally among his seafaring relics for this book. And, as nearly as he could recollect, it was still in good condition, although his mother had given it to him when he was a boy starting upon his first voyage as a sailor before the mast. I inferred from the twinkle in his eye that he had only used it in the gravest emergencies, when the topmast was broken, the rudder gone, and nothing else could be done to save the ship.

'We always made port then according to the Scriptures, limped in by faith,' he added, still grinning, but

with a curious look of recollection as if he had not thought of this circumstance in a very long time.

After that I picked up all the ancient seas and lands as charted and laid off in the Captain's old Bible, saw them more clearly as we do when time or space has been removed from between us and the meaning of the thing we look for.

From this time forward I received few flowers and delicacies to eat from visiting friends, and more books to read. So long as they come bearing innocuous foods when you are ill, smooth your bedcovers and lay a rose on your pillows, you are not doing so well. But when they leave off agreeing with whatever you say and begin to contribute hardy mental nourishment to your support, the indications are that you are convalescing.

I took courage and began to read up through that astonishingly diverse pile of books on the table beside my bed. To enjoy books, one must not only have leisure, but a sense of leisure. The mind must be elastic and cordial, not gnarled and bowed by too many opinions and prejudices to defend. I was so relaxed physically that I had lost the personal animus of my own intellect toward other people's views. I was very agreeable, reduced to a sort of childish languor of the spirit which greatly resembled famished credulity lying upon its back. The impression I wish to convey is that my attitude toward this whirlwind library, blown in from so many sources, was friendly and unsuspicious. You get the wink of humor involved in the situation when I copy the titles of these books. They varied all the way from Froude's lectures on the 'Life and Letters of Erasmus,' Cellini's Autobiography, to a sweet little

volume of plays by James Barrie; various novels of the softer, more doubtful substance of life, and three or four good ones. Two books came by mail — more of them later. I had no suspicions at the time, but now I shall always believe they were both sent by some innocent person legging it after the Algonquin Group.

If these friends had brought strong liquors and laid loaded firearms beside my bed, they could not have provided more ferocious stimulation to my moral sense or furnished a more effective arsenal for arousing my somnambulant faculties. Within three weeks I was on my feet, not mended in health, but my loins girded up, virtuously speaking, ready to go forth and pot a Primitive on sight. Never before have I experienced such a strong inclination to lead a movement in defense of my country! Traitors among us, masquerading as artists, cultural people, engaged in the nefarious business of destroying conscience and the sense of moral values!

This in fact was the sharpest corner I turned in the Happy Pilgrimage. I lost my singing mind and was never able from that time to recover the tune except in broken snatches. I was always on the alert, looking for one of these scamps of the fine arts. Never once did I come to grips with one of them. My feeling is that they probably recognized me first, and kept at a discreet mental distance, not so much out of respect for my prejudices as on account of a sort of contempt such people would feel for an old obsolete verb in living who belonged to a vanishing order.

But let that go for the present. I started off mildly enough on that course of reading with Froude's lectures on Erasmus.

Lately some one has complained that too many of us

are 'still living in the nineteenth century.' His point is not well taken. He has probably not considered what would happen if all the men and women of this generation were actually living consciously in the twentieth century. With all of us crowding that close to the front I tremble to think what kind of history we might produce. Fortunately the rudder of every age is hinged on behind. It consists of that slower-moving mass of men that never want to catch up, but which control the rocking, storm-tossed millions in front because they cannot be shaken off. For my part I doubt if any man is properly balanced in his own tunes who does not spend much of his thinking and observing life in the centuries behind him.

Just so, for a couple of evenings, long enough to read the book, I enjoyed traveling around with Erasmus through the various kingdoms of Europe. But the trip I made with him covered that part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the yeast of men's minds was rising again. Certain scholars were about to snatch the Bible from the priests and preachers and present it in a freer translation of salvation to common men. It was a serious time, lurid with vice, leading to the flare of martyrs burning at the stake along the skyline of Christianity. Like other religious people I had never realized the humanness of the heroes who figured in it. I had the vaguest impression of Erasmus as a very dignified student, pious, and absorbed in the work of translating certain Gospels, who quite by accident escaped the martyr's fate. But time can cast a very witty eye upon some of the gravest figures in history. The man I discovered in this book was not the holy learned gentleman of my reverent imagination. He was a thin

little man, shabbily dressed, anxious to give himself a few airs in honor of his learning because such learning was so rare, but a mendicant to the last, always beholden to the favor of kings and princes, bootlicking bishops for a pittance, courting fair ladies for a few crowns, a scamp in the robes of a priest — an honorable scholar who might have sold his talents to Rome for a cardinal's hat, but not to be seduced, holding fast his integrity as a translator of the Scriptures, without, so far as I could discover, any real religious relations with God. But for the sake of his honor as a medium through which the Word should be given to free men's souls, he suffered every privation. He was always 'starving' for books in his complaints, afflicted with dysentery, calling upon the great of this earth to take note of the pains in his bowels only because these pains kept him from his work. Therefore, would my Lord So-and-So spare him a certain sum with which to buy better wine and food. He complained of this indignity simply because it reflected upon the luster of learning. Still, he went on living by his wits, with no compunctions for a few years of fast living in Paris, but covering those with well-told lies. What a rascal, scorning every hypocrisy in the secret revelations he makes of himself in letters to his friends, but sticking with the dignity and righteousness of Moses pecking out the Ten Commandments when it comes to the meaning of a word of the Gospels he translated.

He was the moral counterpart of the noble French lady who sold her virtue to many lovers to obtain the means with which she supported an invalid husband whom she adored! There is no logic in such a character, but logic is purely a mental process, which has

less to do with human conduct than we are willing to admit.

The thing that astounded me about Erasmus was the way he could rise, without a single pious exclamation of self-consciousness, out of the coward and rascal he was and show the noblest appreciations in other people of the virtues he lacked. The interpretations he writes of the kings and great men of his times are more revealing and convincing than any historian ever gives. I am one of the few respectable women I ever heard of who entertains some kind of admiration for Henry VIII, due chiefly to an occasional sketch Erasmus puts in about him. He passes over that king's erotic tendencies with that curious and diverting silence peculiar to masculine delicacy about such matters before a mixed audience. And he dismisses with a witty remark Henry's somewhat abrupt political policies of beheading objectionable noblemen. But he writes with simple and convincing eloquence of this same king's respect and loyalty to certain incontestably honorable men, as in the case of Colet, the Dean of Saint Paul's, whom he consistently protected and defended against jealous churchmen. And while Erasmus was about it he put in a short biography of Colet which is the simplest, noblest description of a good man I have ever read.

Henry VIII was no more consistently corrupt than Erasmus was consistently decent. They both had about one virtue apiece which redeemed them from the horror and contempt of posterity — and if you think about it, that is a good deal to say for one virtue, to weigh so much as to overbalance a thousand vices.

I was fascinated with Cellini's Autobiography. It is

a one-man volume of the life of his times, complete in every detail — war, religion, art, music, every virtue and every vice. It is enough to say, in admiration if not praise of Cellini, that he lived it all with a degradation and a splendor that is unequaled in the record we have of any other man. An arrant hypocrite, he had a veracity of mind and that rarer gift, a truthful use of words, that reveals all the hypocrisies with the artless frankness of a child that has no moral sense of its own fallacies. He was such a liar that, when he told the truth, the truth became a lie, because deceit and concealment were among the fine arts of his times, and he exposed them both. He was a great artist, a blackguard, a murderer, and a thief, who believed in God with the outrageous audacity of a villain. This was one of the heroic characteristics of Christian faith during that period. The description he writes of his vision of the sun after being imprisoned for a long time in a dungeon is a finer piece of work than he ever wrought in gold or bronze. This was the quality of his genius; he could accomplish any miracle with it, even to making himself see God in the bright bosom of the sun.

When I had finished the book, I had the feeling of having read the life of an immortal man whose temper and times afforded him the opportunity to exercise the worst and the best instincts with heroic vehemence without thinking. Simply by living in the pulse of his period he met with more adventures in a day than the modern puerile thrill-seeker would risk in a lifetime.

Shelley, poor soul, was born three hundred years later, but André Maurois' interpretation of him, in his book called 'Ariel,' suggests marked similarities of character and temperament between Shelley and Cel-

lini. The same violent spirit, another amazing genius, financed by the imagination of a poet rather than the golden imagery and skillful brains of a silversmith. But Shelley lived and fumed and sang in a different age. Policemen and civil law had taken the place of popes in civilization, an improvement over Cellini's times when a man could commit murder and do a sort of pageant penance for it dressed up in a blue velvet jacket, instead of being hanged ingloriously by the neck. Men's minds had been tamed by systems of thought. Radicals and rationalists had begun to write popular books that recommended their false doctrines in terms of the finest sentiment and most convincing logic. So, in spite of his violent passions, Shelley was never disposed to go out and kill his enemy. He had the elegant sensibilities of a poet and no taste for murder. He was reduced to the intellectual revolts of a radical, all of which he tried out with the eagerness and credulity of a child. He could not attend a banquet given by Byron accompanied by his 'crow,' but Cellini went brazenly to Michelangelo's feast. Shelley's age had imposed a sense of decency in these matters. Free-love was a conviction he had picked up from the radicals. So he took his women from various walks of life, with or without marriage vows; no more moral than Cellini, but, victim of a false doctrine, he was some kind of scandalous husband to these unhappy creatures. He suffered poverty, persecution, and money misfortunes even as had Cellini and was never to be put down on that account. Instead of fashioning an immortal salt cellar and casting the Perseus, he wrote the 'Skylark' and 'Prometheus Unbound.' But it did not come to quite the same thing on account of the spirit of his times.

Cellini outwitted the piety of his, and got himself buried with honors in a cathedral. Shelley made a tragic ending and got his ashes scattered to the four winds. We are undoubtedly responsible for the lives we live, and pay heavily for the privilege of living at all, but not for the fate that overtakes us. We collect it, and work on it, and write it down far ahead of time without knowing what we are doing. And no provision we consciously make has anything to do with what happens at the very last.

After reading through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with a scholar and a scamp to interpret them, both adventurers, I lay back upon my pillows like a good old thing and wondered if I should have chosen either one of these periods in which to make a happy pilgrimage. Decidedly not. There were too many men going around with daggers hidden in their sleeves and swords buckled on their hips. I have always suspected, with no pride at all in the suspicion, that there was something of the man in me, mentally speaking, but I retain the feelings and sensibilities of a woman, and am temperamentally opposed to the shedding of blood or to being burned at the stake for my religious convictions. Besides, women do not seem to have fared very well during these periods. Apparently they were not eligible to but one kind of adventure, and had very little security outside of convents. A widow of Mary Thompson's age, traveling alone at a time when the world was more than half-submerged in vice and religion, might have written some illuminating pages into the history of that period, but I doubt if she would have enjoyed the journey.

If we consider how much longer mankind has been

religious than moral, it is astonishing how much farther we have advanced morally than we have spiritually. Maybe I should not say such a thing; maybe it is more religious to sit down, as we have sat for ages, so ignorant of God the Creator that we cannot understand many of the Scriptures and sing, 'O Lord, revive us again!' until we work ourselves up to an emotional frenzy and do get a fleeting vision of Him as long as the emotion lasts; but I do think the discrepancy between our moral sense and religious intelligence is due to the fact that religion has been preached sentimentally and with the contradictory bias of many creeds, not as law and a working principle of life. And I believe the time will come when preachers will be truly learned men and the churches great universities where God will be taught reverently and honestly as a great text. Then there will be no temperamental antagonism to religion and men's minds will be filled with the light and glory of His Word, which is written no less in the foundations of the earth to the farthest star than it is in the Bible, that one short scroll of the great anthem of life and eternal life. We shall still walk by faith, but men's faith will move with a longer stride. There is no sin in adding as much knowledge as possible to what we cannot know, but only believe. It would not surprise me if somebody finds out enough from all the sciences and all the religions to write a sort of abridged but serviceable biography of the Lord. If so, it will be a great book and the author of it will be a master scientist and a true saint. It is outrageous to undertake to divorce the teachings of religion from the processes of creation, when God is also the maker of the heavens and the earth and our immortal spirits are still imprisoned in

that very carnal material, human flesh. How are we to know ourselves without knowing all the elements from which we came, much less know the Almighty?

There will be no more theological quibblings then about the birth of Christ or His divinity. We shall know, however He was born, that He is divine by His very works and He will be recognized as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, as we recognize any other law posted for our safety. What does it matter how we came, so that at last we arrive somewhere within the rim of His glory and in His likeness?

These are dangerous things to say, lest some malicious saint should quote no more than enough to make me a liar and an atheist, for they are good at that. But they are welcome to do their worst so far as I am concerned. I have no worldly reputation for piety to defend; I am finishing my course here in living, and, in spite of the blind terrors I have endured under the narrow and cruel dispensations of His Word, I also have seen God and I am resolved to leave behind me some sort of halting record of this safer one to trust than the pinch-faced deity handed down to us in some very heinous theology.

We are very small potatoes, however, compared to the way we talk. As a matter of fact I have never got beyond worshiping that dear Garden God of my earliest childhood, so personally observant of me, so sure to punish me for my transgressions, so sure to reward me for my virtues in case I ever acquired a virtue, so sure to keep me in every misfortune. I remember yet how close kin I felt as a very small child to that sparrow mentioned in the Scriptures, that could not fall without my Heavenly Father's taking compassionate note of

the fact. This seemed to me a very favorable circumstance in my own case, and I have prayed many a little fluttering sparrow's prayer in the dust of my earliest sins. But I cover this weakness of mine with a reference to that woman with the issue of blood who slipped through the crowd about Jesus one day, saying to herself, 'If I but touch His clothes I shall be whole.' And when Jesus felt the touch and discovered her there behind Him, ashamed and fearful, He said, 'Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole . . .' — not her knowledge, you understand. What He meant, I suppose, was that however ignorant we are honest faith is never blind. Just so, to this day, no matter how grand and wide my ideas of religion have become, some times in a woeful moment of despair I am still capable of reaching up like a dear old fool of faith and touching the hem of His garment and getting my breath much easier afterwards. I do not suppose He minds, knowing how hard I am striving to get a wisdom of Him beyond the childishness of prayers.

What really happened that sun-brightened afternoon when I had just finished Cellini's Autobiography had nothing to do with the serious reflections I have been writing here, but had to do with a certain plan which I have forgotten to record. I have no highly cultivated barbaric taste for jewels. I have never wanted a diamond or any other precious stone. And I should as soon be tattooed as to wear one. But I have the silliest passion for beautifully wrought metals. I should like very much to wear a golden chain made of lovely links that would hang a long way down over my breast, which, of course, comes to the same thing so far as indicating the barbaric instinct in the matter of ornaments. Now,

shortly before I had started on my travels I had seen such a chain, made of tiny, yellow blossoms of gold, wide-open petals, all the same size, yet each one differing in some faint hand-wrought detail from the others. The sweetness and delicacy of the thing charmed me. And when the fortunate lady who was wearing it told me that it came from Peru and that such things could be picked up there for a song, I resolved to have one. My idea was to make Peru at least for a week-end coming or going on my travels and simply snatch one of these chains in passing, whatever the cost. You can see how free and untrammeled my imagination was as a prospective pilgrim, with no more embarrassment about the geographical formations of the two American continents than a bird might have on a winter flight in search of summer weather.

Meanwhile, so many untoward things had happened to me as a weary, wingless human being that I had forgotten all about the chain until I began to read Cellini's entrancing accounts of his work in gold and silver. Then I used to lie back every few pages and wish for it with all the craving of the vainest woman. Why I could not wish for something else more sensible I do not know, a set of dishes, or a clean heart! I did finally get the dishes, but they did not satisfy me, because they were not hand-wrought and could not be worn around the neck, I suppose! As for a clean heart, that is a relative thing. I should exercise great discretion there. Those whom I have suspected of having them seemed cold and colorless people. Lord, give me enough human pigment of the spirit to stain mine! And this is not meant for blasphemy. I hate perfection. It is worse than damnable; it is finished, dead!

The only fortunate circumstance connected with that chain is that I did not get it — and still want it. When you have reached my age of seriousness and submission, it is a sort of pleasure to go on wishing for some silly thing with the ardor of a child.

I cannot tell now how it happened, but one morning, lying lazily and peacefully in my bed after a rather better night than usual, I reached over and chose one of the larger volumes from the books on the table. I thought it was another historical biography, for the title was 'Ulysses.' As a matter of fact it might as well have been christened 'Hiram' for all the relation the name bore to the contents. Any name would have answered, the worse the better, for the thing had no resemblance to the rose and fragrance of decent thought.

I began to read, mystified, my mind mixing deeper and deeper in what the British call 'nawsty' imagery. Page after page of shocking ejaculations, written after the manner of conversation, but without verbs, exclamation points, or quotation marks. I could not make out whether it was the soliloquy of a damned soul or the mouthings of a gifted idiot who had dropped a stitch in the intelligent use even of the worst words. You get the idea that there are several men in it, all taking a primordial view of things. There is a sentence portrait of one of them after some cryptic remark that implies an unspeakable joke: 'A coughball of laughter leaped from his throat, dragging after it a rattling chain of phlegm.' And I am copying one of the more respectable passages with which the next chapter begins, some man in action, really speaking, you understand, though there is no way of discovering this except by in-

ference, because the author practices none of the literary manners of politeness to the reader:

'Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and sea wrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware of them bodies before of them coloured. How? By knocking his sconce against them, sure. Go easy. Bald he was and a millionaire. . . . Limit of the diaphane in. Why in? Diaphane, adiaphane. If you can put your five fingers through it, it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see.'

I do hope I have not unwittingly quoted something indecent because I do not know what it means, but as near as I can make out this paragraph refers to a very intelligent young man taking a walk on the beach. He closes his eyes and goes ahead. He gets nerves and calls himself 'a stride at a time.' He goes on working himself up and mumbles:

'Rhythm begins, you see, I hear. A catalectic tetrameter of iambs marching. No, a gallop *deline the mare.*

'Open your eyes now. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since? If I open and am forever in the black diaphane. *Basta!* I will see if I can see.

'See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end.'

I am copying here the neater details of what he sees, after this kitten of a Primitive gets his eyes open:

'They came down the steps of Leahy's terrace prudently, *Frauenzimmer;* and down the shelving shore

flabbily their splayed feet sinking in the silted sand. Like me, like Algy, coming down to our mighty mother. Number one swung lourdily her midwife's bag.... What has she in the bag? A misbirth with a trailing navel cord, hushed in ruddy wool. The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh. That is why mystic monks. Will you be as gods? Gaze in your omphalos. Hello. Kinch here. Put me on to Edenville. Aleph, alpha: nought, nought one.'

The quotation marks are mine, the punctuation, and the lack of it is his. The word 'omphalos' sounded so doubtfully medical that I looked it up and found that it is proper enough, but used figuratively here as a sort of geographical term indicating nothing more scandalous than the navel of the human body.

But can you imagine me sitting up taut for once without the support of my pillows, reading stuff like this, goggle-eyed, when I expected the book would contain some kind of storm-tossed version of the adventures of Ulysses? Can you imagine that hardy old hero of Homer's Odyssey halting in the midst of his exploits to contemplate his 'omphalos' or giving away to depressing thoughts because he had one, as if that would forever bar him from immortal fame? Not a word about the heroic instinct with which the 'mystic monks' and the Ulysseses are also born! The earth is made of dust, part of it dung, but it blooms and lifts forests above the mountain-tops. Upon its great breasts are laid the scenes of the noblest tragedies of nature and the glories of the heavens. But you cannot be a primitive and take such obvious miracles into account. They are worse than blasphemers of the Lord, whose Almighty dignity cannot be diminished;

they are blasphemers of man. Their object is to degrade his consciousness and reduce him to the litany of his navel cord, 'creation for nothing'! He is not the hero, but the victim of an epic of slime. Yet I have seen more than one review in which this book was extravagantly praised as a great literary achievement.

Why do we call these young degenerates 'intellectuals'? Is it intellectual to be decadent or merely corrupt?

I was never a prude mentally. I have a gallant mind morally when it comes to literature. I can read a bad book with hardy interest, and have derived much useful information from faithfully dramatized vice, but I was so outraged by this author's insolence to his readers, making an affectation of incoherency, and so disgusted with the atavism of his genius, that it was impossible to read beyond the fiftieth page of this volume which contains more than seven hundred.

Ideas rarely come to us spelled out in words, but they reach us in some kind of shorthand of the mind, dashes of color, feeling, visions not yet spoken. Writers are supposed to supply the best words possible, real adjectives, good stout verbs or fierce verbs, or love-bearing ones, words of power and motion to carry the burden of the thought in that sentence. You are not supposed to drop your periods on the printed page as a child drops pebbles, regardless of whether you have finished the sentence, or have merely set down two homeless nouns, and posted them to the page with a period. The poor things frequently do not get so much as an adjective with which to clothe themselves, no verb to ride; and they sustain no family relation in sense to that other fragment of a sentence you have

just written before them, nor the 'snotgreen' adjective you write after them, which is a very disgusting one you merely sneeze to describe a lovely strip of sea water. This is not only discourteous to the reader, it is indecent. And the way you leave us to think out the quotation marks for you when two or three scamps are talking in the tale is nothing short of slouchy impudence.

We have had the impressionists and the cubists in art, now we must have these primitives in literature. Their method is so simple only a foolish person could use it. They copy into words the disconnected monkey antics an ugly mind performs when it is amusing itself by thinking in jerks or playing with its primordial tail. They skip from one subject to another, go back, repeat certain keynote phrases to themselves. In short, they translate the processes of mental gestation and call it literature. The effect is curiously idiotic, interesting to a student of metaphysics, but it sustains the same relation to literature that a mollusk does to a man.

Mr. Swish Tosh writes this kind of stuff. In one of his books he spends ten thousand words contemplating, you may say, the 'omphalos' of his own mind. He gives himself a good name with a wise smile, and confesses to the reader that he is a torn-down genius of the muddiest water. The story itself is only revolting, grows worse and worse, weaker and weaker. The only relaxation the reader gets is now and then when he lets go in a fit of idiotic merriment and whistles something like this:

> T'witchelty, T'weedelty, T'wadelty, T'wum,
> Catch a nigger by his thumb —

and you go on looking for what stands for the 'nigger' in the theme of his tale, so dark and rich and fat with the grossest imagery of a low imagination. No life can be as revolting as he depicts it. When it sinks that far, it becomes insensate. As near as I can make out this is the 'nigger' of the thing — his genius, that can whistle to a ribald tune the insensate and unspeakable.

And these primitives actually make up as the authors of their tales. Mr. Tosh has a picture of himself printed on the jacket of one of his novels, showing that the artist has given him a 'facial' of black, villainous lines that imparts a look of the lowest bestiality to his countenance. Here is the joke of it — a thrill-loving woman's club, no doubt stirred by this frightful face, invited Tosh to deliver a lecture to them. He proved to be a respectable-looking person, dressed in bad taste, but not floridly in checks and a screaming tie — 'store-bought clothes.' He proved to be a dull, decent speaker and the very pink of modesty in the opinions he handed them.

This is the straight of it; these fellows are the exponents of rationalism in fiction, who, like other rationalists, do not dare to behave as evilly as they endeavor to teach other people to think, hidden behind the back of the book they have written.

There is nothing ugly in its significance in the material world; there is nothing actually known to us so full of romance as realism. It is the mind through which it is transcribed and presented that makes it mean and dishonorable. I know a writer who always looks up when he is laying a scene outside, never at the ground, or those commonplace furnishings with which we so frequently lower the high aims of nature there. In

Paris, that city famed for its vices, he sees her spires, her airy curves against the skyline at night, a lovely lady of the evening clothed in light. He sees the fountains in the Place de la Concorde being like slim trees.

I cannot remember in years to have been so stirred up as I was after foraging around for a week among these masterpieces of the primordial geniuses. I had no idea such a thing existed as the primitive school of fiction. I could no longer lie quietly in bed. Something had happened. I felt obliged to get up and find out what was going on. I had my ears cocked listening for some reference to this strange abortion of the literary mind. But no one said anything. During the whole of my travels I did not hear one reference to these writers or their works. My conclusion was that I was either the only person who had been guilty of reading them, or that it was secret literature of the sort nice people do not mention even if they know it, as we do not publish either the best or the worst we think.

V

SOME people can be patient and convalesce strictly according to the doctor's directions. I never could. My spirit always gets well before I do. And I am not the one to keep the immortal thing imprisoned in a recumbent body while I make a piety of quoting 'my doctor' as a justification for this cowardice, as if my doctor was my god. I am a jolly atheist so far as these admirable men are concerned, except when some acute misery forces me into faith and obedience to them. The moment I feel a trifle better, though a 'specialist' tells me I shall never be well again, I am up in the spirit and take a sort of wanton pleasure in being ungrateful to the whole medical profession.

I cannot tell how many efficient and vigorous doctors I have survived to send flowers for their funerals, simply by disregarding their instructions to lie still, keep as quiet as possible, and 'give Nature a chance.' My idea is never to give Nature more than one brief chance, and to use the other chances myself to outwit her. What is Nature anyhow? A rank materialist, with a bee in her bonnet! That's what she is! She cares nothing for the years you have spent getting wisdom. Her ends are best served by getting rid of the old and wise in order to make room for the young and foolish who are amenable to her purposes. After you are my age, if you give her the 'chance,' she will drop you like a withered leaf from her boughs. In any case your spiritual element does not count in her calculations.

The soul is a pension, a sort of life-extension policy you get from the Almighty which she does not recognize, because she is functioning according to another law in His scheme of things. Therefore, Nature should never be thought of too fervidly in the nominative case after she has accomplished her purpose with you. It is time then to take to the higher laws in living. I have known many a woman at this abler age, however, who made an invalid of herself and was reduced to a merely medical vocabulary of her symptoms — still 'giving Nature a chance,' you understand, long after Nature had forgotten her, when she might have kept a jolly rover's mind even if she could not use her legs.

Some of the longest journeys I have ever made were undertaken successfully while I was on the bed without so much as going to the expense of purchasing a guide-book, much less a ticket. I was very near Mount Rainier at one time last year, but I could not risk the fatigue of climbing the thing. I simply remained at a comfortable climatic distance and imagined how cold and beautiful this mountain and the surrounding scenery must be. It is all right to enjoy using your eyes, but it is not wise to become a mere glutton of the eye and totally dependent upon them for sight. The imagination is a field-glass of the mind that can bring the most distant sight within range of your private vision. I ride mine as if it were a coal-black charger with a satin-waved mane and tail. I sail in it as if it were a gallant ship at sea. All you have to do is to read a little, study a map of the world regardless of lines of latitude and longitude, snap your fingers, go ahead, and pass the strongest youth whom that fat old dame, Nature, is still patting on the back, encouraging him to

END OF THE CABIN, SHOWING SLEEPING-PORCH AT BACK

use up his strength and shout 'Excelsior!' with his last aspiring breath.

Saint John, after he was old and blind, beheld his vision of the Eternal City, the jasper walls, the seven golden candlesticks, and the face of Him whom it is not lawful to behold with the naked eye, but at that he would have nothing on me as a sight-seer in this present world even when I am lying flat on my back. I just get up in my spirit and travel on the sly with no theologian or Baedeker to contradict me with his doctrines or his guide-book of accurate information.

The same thing is true of men and women. Wherever two or three are gathered together, there you will find the least common multiple of mankind — easier to read than a mob, yet containing the elements of a mob, or of a holy crusade. We are not so different from each other by nature, only in ideals, purposes, and opportunities. It is not necessary to attend a course of lectures on metaphysics, or to lead a bad life, or even a good one, in order to get a working knowledge of human nature. Some of the most successful psychological operations I have ever performed were upon a visitor sitting beside my bed who never suspected that she was the subject of an experiment.

What I mean is this: The bodies we live in wear out and become unreliable. They cannot go when we want to go. They get a pain in the side or grow weak in the back. The thing to do then is to take refuge in your mind, use all those faculties that have lain dormant when you were in the strength of your flesh, as a blind man uses his sense of touch, and go ahead. My idea is always to go ahead!

Sensible people practiced this wit of health and

courage long before these modern theologians of health thought it out and gave it a doctrinal name, like 'Science,' spelled with a capital 'S.' Whenever I run across one of these formulas, whether it has to do with health, politics, social economy, or religion, I sit down, put on my spectacles, pluck all the capital letters out of it, and find out what the thing really means cleared of these fallacious exaggerations of type to delude the credulous. Usually I have discovered it to be some simple axiom of common sense with which I have long been familiar without taking on about it like one of these artless enthusiasts who rise up and found an 'order' or a church to exploit an idea, new to him, but well known to Marcus Aurelius, who practiced it a thousand years ago on snakes. His theory about venomous men and venomous reptiles was that they were that way by nature and could not help being so. The thing to do was not to try to reform them, but to leave them alone. And he said it all in small type, because the whole of life is written that way in the mind of a stoic.

My own conviction is that fatally venomous men and women should be at least segregated, preferably electrocuted, instead of turning them over to be petted and shielded by the alienists, and finally paroled by the sentimentalists, who do not believe in capital punishment for a class who practice it upon the defenseless and innocent. If only we could persuade our criminal classes to confine their activities to the sentimentalists, we should get a healthier moral atmosphere in this country almost immediately — as the people of the South have been delivered from meddling altruists of the North since we unloaded half a million negroes on

them quite by accident a few years ago. The tables were turned, and the character of the struggle between us changed. We are bent and determined to keep these people up there and they are now anxious to ship them back home.

But let that go. He who laughs last laughs best. The trouble is that it may be a long time between laughs.

Early in June I resolved to be better, whether or no. My physical condition was not improved, and I had it on the authority of a good doctor that it never would be. But the long rest which he advised me to continue indefinitely had been good for my mind. Such thinking as I had done these two months was aimless, involuntary, like wordless tunes one hums in a pleasant mood. That whole armor of God I put on so many years ago in order to keep up with Lundy had been laid aside, as a tired old knight crawls out of his when his fighting days are over — not, you understand, that I was much of a knight at this business, only a devoted woman whom the great shield and buckler never fitted very well. I had rested from all this, too, worrying no more as I had worried about withstanding evil and doing good. But I had been fattening my more cheerful human wit upon the friendliness of strangers who entertained no suspicion of the fact that I had hag-ridden myself nearly to death in the name of the Lord and literature.

Encompassed about by so many favorable circumstances, the witness of my own spirit, which I never lose, turned up in fine fettle. After the excursion I made through a few masterpieces of fiction written by

the modern primitives, I could feel it clanking, as a sword rattles against the brawny legs of a fighting man. I had not relinquished the idea of prancing forth and taking a few slashes at these fellows. I could think of so many beheading things to say about them. I might deliver a lecture — plenty of invitations in that bright-minded country came to me, and I really was tempted, though it is not my habit to accept one of these shotgun invitations to expose myself before any kind of an audience. I know from having sat in the ambush of so many audiences what an advantage they have, and usually take, of the speaker of the evening. If you want to know how frightful the mortality among lecturers is, take part in the target practice of the audience, especially if it is a feminine one and the speaker is a woman. I prefer to use an ink-barrel weapon myself and keep out of range, whether I am praising or bleeding them. These fine-featured, diaphanous audiences have more sense than a mixed one, and five times as much as one composed of 'men only.' Especially, I repeat, if the victim standing before them is another woman, because, you understand, we know each other only too well, better than we ever know even our own husbands, and we have a disastrous competitive instinct in the matter of ideas no less than in the matter of affections, which renders us by nature more dangerous to each other than men are, who are used to ideas by this time and can always renew their affections. Besides, men are much more afraid of each other than women are of anybody, male or female. I refer, of course, to physical fear. We have not developed our blood-shedding instincts as they have contending with each other for ages. So we are singularly free and fear-

less with the only weapon we have ever used, our tongues.

But the cowardly reflections were not the only considerations which restrained me. I have a hunch that there is an element of the primordial feminine in the minds of these primitives, which, if you think about it, is a frightful combination to run up against, regardless of the quality of your own brains, grammar, and eloquence.

Alas, my dears, how childish we are, from the mightiest to the meekest! Every one of us is born with a genius for egotism to keep us from discovering how futile and transient we are. We must be vain about something, either secretly or openly, otherwise life becomes an unbearable tragedy, illuminated from the inside by our own light of ridicule or contempt. Even so, here was I, barely beginning to creep up out of a fatal illness, weak as a kitten, still bound in a futile sort of way on a happy pilgrimage, but forgetting all these circumstances to work the animus of a reformer against a new dark school of light literature, as if anything could be done about it!

In my right mind I belong to that midget school of thinkers who doubt if a reformer ever actually accomplishes a reform. He only leads off. If nobody follows, he is a flash in the pan. If everybody does, he is a hero and the multitude behind him raise the dust. We think something tremendous is happening, but when the wind of a greater circumstance blows the dust away, we discover that nothing has happened. Everybody dead in his trespasses and sins as usual! Fifty years later the abuse that reformer was so anxious to give his life to correct runs its course and disappears.

He was no more than a symptom of the disorder, the thermometer which registered the temperature of the patient, who was bound to get well anyhow in time. So do we think now of poor old Carrie Nation, who did very little for the cause of temperance. Neither has the Eighteenth Amendment for that matter. But give us time! In the end we must become a temperate people, or perish.

Precisely so, these authors who delete idealism and reduce the romance of living to its primordial elements of passion and insensate vice are no more than the symptoms of a momentary disorder that will run its course as any other disease. They who are subject to this kind of infection will contract it. Meanwhile, even if I possessed the wit to deal devastatingly with them, their ape-jawed genius would have frisked in the attendant publicity. The uglier you make them, and all life, the better they like it. They are subnormal, mental inebriates, who require the *motif* of horror to inspire them. The asylums are full of such people, but not since the middle centuries have they been allowed to escape into literature.

I went on making excuses for not risking my head among them. I was feeling poorly, not physically able to do much execution with that bragging, clanking sword of my spirit. None of us, I said to myself, escape the Will of the Almighty, and He has always been hard on primitives. If they are savages who do not achieve idealism through their superstitions, He wipes them out. If they have advanced so far in the scale of things and then degenerate, He is all the more sure to wipe them out. Therefore, why fash myself trying to damn the damned? I asked, taking a sort of torrid satisfaction

in the ultimate fate of these Caliban cubists of the literary art.

I learned this method of laying goats on the Lord's altar during the active Christian era of my soul. When misfortune overtook Lundy and me, I referred our affairs to Him and always obtained, in the nick of time, the provision He makes, no less for the just than the unjust. When the machinations of evil men destroyed Lundy and cast me down, I lay for a long time where they left me, in an awful peace of mind, having turned them over to the Lord for judgment. And, one by one, I have seen their fate overtake them, not through any special Providence to me, but because a certain fate is inevitable for such people. They choose their own damnation and work it out.

Meanwhile, I am 'sitting pretty,' growing old, broken in health — none too good, bless your dear hearts! — but amazingly ornamented with honors, fame, and fortune, and very busy to the last widening the territory of my faith in God like an industrious pioneer of the Spirit. Never to be terrified again by any fears, myself and all my worldly vanities laid away, but vastly vain at last of my Lord who can afford to keep faith with all men, let His rain fall alike upon the just and the unjust, giving each one an even chance, leaving every one free to work out his own salvation or damnation according to his own will, even to the third and fourth generation. What I mean is, there is no hurry in this business either way. It is only we who hurry because of our finite mind and fears.

But to go back to what I was talking about awhile ago when I started off to elaborate that point of discretion by which I sidestepped an altercation with the 'primitives':

The truth is I am not spectacular morally; I do not lack the gall, but the courage to lead a reform. I suffer from the humor of modesty, from being always able to see myself as I see other people, which causes me to shrink from becoming involved in either a world's movement or a local campaign against some abuse. (This is cowardice. I am admitting that it is and taking this opportunity to stand aside that the truly brave may come to the front and boast.) The most revealing thing I have ever done, so as to be seen with the naked eye, was to 'go up for prayers' in my younger years and kneel at the altar of a church with my back to the congregation, which, any way you look at it, could not have been regarded as the evidence of a public-spirited concern in other men's transgressions. In fact, I have never known an out-and-out reformer to take such a risk of exposing his back to the opinions of the people seated behind him.

But as we grow older the humblest of us grow less contrite and more conceited in our own virtues. Already it seems to me I am conscious of a temptation to do good in a loud voice. I cannot be too thankful, however, that I resisted assailing the school of primitives, because one cannot quote freely enough from their works to justify one's indignation without repeating something no respectable person should know, much less tell. When I am overtaken with this old-age form of egotism, my ambition is to espouse a good clean cause about which one may speak frankly, even with violence, before a mixed audience.

Right now I could do very well in the rear end of a mettlesome movement that lays its tail over the dashboard of our national pride and starts a race against

this European propaganda carried on by our own people under the slogan of 'Ain't you ashamed of America!'

I feel toward these mortified Americans as I used to feel toward the pacifists during the Great War. I know war is wrong, knew it then. We all did, but good Lord deliver me from a puling pacifist when the fat is in the fire and we must fight, whether it is right or wrong to fight! And now I wish we might forcibly lend all these post-war sentimentalists, who forget the loyalty they owe their own country, to almost any country in Europe for the period of sixty-two years, with the understanding that we will never collect even the principal.

It is difficult to decide which is worse, the activities of the radicals and Bolshevists unloaded on us by the Old World or these subsidized advocates for the cancellation of war debts, whom we have raised up among ourselves. The latter are more offensive and embarrassing to our patriotic sensibilities, for when an imported radical grows too rash about freedom in a really free country, we know what to do with him. We send him home. But what can we do with our own citizens, American newspaper correspondents, philanthropists, even ex-war ministers, who go abroad and get taken in by greedy people ready to sacrifice their national honor to avoid paying their just debts if they can cover the defalcation with heartrending eloquence? They are our credulous 'prospects' to whom Europe sells its tales of poverty. Some of them get their heads turned by the hospitality and compliments of designing aristocrats who really despise them. Others belong to the altruistic class, always distinguished for their lopsided ethics. They go abroad with the best intentions in the world — because they must have good intentions, how-

ever idiotic — and they are taken in by the confidences of European statesmen and by equally designing financiers. They think they are behind the scenes of the Old World's poverty-stricken civilizations, when, as a matter of fact, they are taking a course in a sort of summer school taught by the shrewdest men in Europe, learning how to arouse the conscience of their Shylock countrymen and make us ashamed of merely asking a modest return in dollars for that pound of flesh they took from the poorest as well as the richest American citizen in war loans. It takes a man like Garet Garrett to graduate in European finances and to compute the sequestered wealth of those nations without the aid of a tutor.

Shortly after the war began, the governments of all the European powers began to issue their 'White' books, 'Red' books, and 'Blue' books to prove that each one of them was innocent of having caused the war. This is the only evidence any of them have ever shown of a guilty conscience. I used to wonder then why some honest man did not get up and tell the truth in a few simple words, namely, that all of them, including Great Britain, were responsible for that stupendous catastrophe. They planned it and worked on it for years before the thing caught fire. And if America had not been transfigured by idealism and compassion, they would have destroyed each other. We furnished the money, food, clothes, credit, and a great army of fighting men to save them from each other. After the Armistice we went on spreading millions in charity to support the widows and orphans they had so ruthlessly made, more millions for the rehabilitation of their towns and lands; to restore their churches and libra-

ries, besides billions in loans which they needed to re-establish their industries, to bribe their Bolshevists, and to support their retired paupers. And now, when we are still so absurdly gracious as to give them sixty-two years to pay from twenty to eighty cents on the dollar for these loans, they are outraged and cry, 'Shame! Shame!'

Being innocent of everything but our absurd idealism, it did not occur to us to publish a red, white, and blue striped book with the Star-Spangled Banner engraved on the back, to record our services, charities, and loans to our allies. Now we have no allies. They are disgruntled debtors. That is what comes of not publishing with our left hand all the benefits our right hand was conferring upon them.

The truth is we made a colossal mistake. We should have left them severely alone. We may have interfered with the methods of Providence, and when you do that, you get it in the neck, precisely as we are getting it now. For all we know it may have been time in the order of things for those corrupt and decaying people to wipe each other out. I do hope we will have the piety to leave them to the Will of God the next time they feel the mighty urge to destroy each other. They know what they are about, because they know each other. Of the individual, we say nothing, but it stands to reason that nations so eloquently informed with spite, deceit, and ingratitude need to do something to each other.

Whenever I feel the lack of a personal text for a polite prayer, I recall the fact that this country did not join that League of Nations they tried to put over on us, and I just turn loose all my thanksgiving plans.

The picture of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders shows quiet seas and continents. Imagine America carrying only the older half of it on her shoulders by underwriting the military and living expenses these people would surely indulge in under such fortunate financial circumstances.

The trouble with Americans is that we have confounded the historical Old World from which we sprung with that world of to-day. The people who created it are dead and gone. Their culture consists in their museums, art galleries, monuments, cathedrals, abbeys, churchyards, the great poetry, philosophies, and romances of a former age. Nothing doing there now worth emulating, believing, or knowing. Even the nobility appears to have passed away; only a lot of ordinary men and women, grafted ineffectively on the old stock, still wearing the great names of their ancient knights and heroes, but no longer informed with the qualities that made them great.

Look at England, for ages the breeding-place of valorous men who ringed the world with an empire, and played the game whatever the odds were against them without fear and without reproach. I suppose it was a shock to every very proud American when she flunked and joined the pack of our traducers. It is the quality of brave men to be honest.

Personally, I never could stomach Britishers in the politer social relations. An English hostess can insult the stranger whom she has invited to her house by the very insolence with which she offers a cup of tea. If you have a gentle manner, they think you are lowly bred. But if you plagiarized their manners, you would be deleted from the best social circles in this country.

Still, I have always cherished a long-distance admiration for these people, for their very work's sake. I entertained a sort of asinine pride on account of having descended from them. Now I am only too glad that my family hurried up and descended before the quality of the stock deteriorated. It is bad enough to default an honorable obligation, but it is positively ignoble to repay a generous creditor with calumnies. 'It is not — er — playing the game, don't you know — What!' — Who among us will ever again grin appreciatively at that idiotic British way of saying a good thing, since they no longer have the reputation to back it up.

The whole situation may be a tragedy of propinquity. For ages these nations of the Old World have lived too close together. They have been like contentious neighbors who could look over the back fence of their frontiers and spy upon each other. It is impossible to get keyhole information about the noblest man living without finding out enough to become suspicious of him. Just so these European nations know each other so frightfully well that no bond of trust can exist between them which is not backed up by an army and navy. The League of Nations would never have secured them against war, not even if we had joined it. We should only have under-written the expense account of their quarrels with men and money, because by long and too many disastrous experiences with each other they have destroyed the mental and moral basis of peace. They suffer from a sort of geographical intimacy which has made it impossible for them to practice any kind of Monroe doctrine of privacy, which is really the international psychology of peace and good manners, reduced to a formula. When

the exigencies of the Great War forced us to set it aside in order to come to the rescue of European civilizations, two disastrous consequences inevitably followed: that gratifying sense of superiority which even our allies had enjoyed toward America and her people was destroyed. They were awakened to the realization of their own inferiority, not only in wealth and brains, but in that adolescent flare of foolhardy courage in our troops which saved the day for her better-trained, worn-out armies, who were never young except in years, but very old by ages and ages of wars they had fought in vain, either for gain, or to recover losses, or to impose the tyranny of laws or religious creeds, never, never to insure peace! That determined the difference between their soldiers and ours in France. Leaving politicians and war profiteers aside, the American soldiers went over transfigured by an ideal too noble to attain on account of the quality of the peoples they fought to save. Still it inspired them with a finer, cleaner courage of glorious sacrifice than merely fighting for his life ever gives a man or a nation. From the meanest to the best they were touchingly immortal men in that war.

But in the second consequence that follows lies Europe's greatest misfortune. The average American's eyes are open at last. The glamour of romance and ideality that stretched the width of an ocean between us and them has been blown away. We see those people clearly. We recognize their diminishing characteristics of avarice and jealousy. We no longer trust or respect them. Things will never be as they were before, not if they subsidize every American tourist and busybody with their flattery and confidences to cry shame on this country. Tourists and traveling thinkers are not

the vertebræ of any country. They are no more than the breath we exhale. The backbone of us stays at home and stiffens under provocation.

The hiatus between thinking and doing is really the longest length we make in living, which is a fortunate circumstance for us and especially for other people. If we achieved anywhere near what we are capable of thinking up to do, we should pile up too many explosive deeds to make us safe members of society. This defines one of the beauties of my own life that has no biographical value, because, after all I have written to the contrary, a great deal of my time is passed in just thinking and living, but not doing anything about it. Thus, while I was passing through a mild mental frenzy brought on by reading doubtful fiction, I was actually living as innocently as a poor old flower, withered by a windy circumstance, but beginning to freshen up and grow stronger on my stems. I made haste to get out in the sun, and presently was able to travel the very short distance between my cottage and the main building on the Miramar grounds.

This is the old ranch-house, built by a nephew of Sir Richard Dalton, and still the home of his descendants. Along with the building of thirty or forty cottages for guests, various additions were made to the ranch-house. The hall was widened into a lobby for the hotel desk and offices. A broad, short staircase from the second floor comes down into it. There is a great dining-room behind overlooking the sea, and a series of drawing-rooms opening into it on the left. But on the right as you enter this lobby there is a shorter, wider doorway with thicker jambs, as if it had been set

in by a paunchier, ruddier race of men — as indeed it was. For it opens into the living-room of the ancient ranch-house which has never been changed — 'a museum piece' that room! old, faded, plain, and indescribably alluring. To enter it is like stepping into the firelight of an honorable past. A thick old chimney exposes its attic shoulders before it reaches the low ceiling, as if it did not care how it looked. I have seen a few really great men of short stature who could afford to indulge the same indifference about their appearance. The mantel was low and wide. The fireplace did the best it could under these circumstances, built, I should say, to throw out light and heat, and to draw all men to it: a circle of homely armchairs around it, like fine old gentlemen perpetually warming their stout legs.

But the thing to which I desire to draw your particular attention is a desk that stood away, somewhat aloof, on the right side of the fireplace, because it is practically the only piece of furniture I shall need in the story that follows. You will not believe the tale. No one to whom I have related it hesitates to retort that he or she 'simply does not believe one word of it.' What I have to say by way of rebuttal is that, whenever I go to the pains of telling a lie, I endeavor not to strain the credulity of others by making it too absurd. On the contrary, I am so moderate and convincing at this business that in the various truthful narratives I have written, wherever a fallacious incident is included for the sake of art or to pass the time more agreeably than I could by telling another barefaced truth, my readers have written most frequently to claim the prevarication as being 'so true to life' and

similar to an incident in their own experience. But let that go. I am in no way responsible for the fact that it is characteristic of most men and women that they are more easily deluded by a reasonable lie than convinced by a truth which seems unreasonable, when they should know the author would be more concerned to make the former convincing because he is foolish enough to think the truth is its own defender. I have no way of proving that what I am about to tell really happened, beyond the obvious inference that no sensible person would invent such an incredible incident, especially one with my ferocious reputation for veracity to defend. But I am putting in the desk as 'circumstantial evidence,' which I have observed is easily obtained and strangely convincing because it appeals more to the imagination than do facts. And the desk is still there, though the astonishing hero of this tale vanished as suddenly as he appeared.

This desk is an idea conceived in wood by a true artist who had no vanities and excrescences of his own imagination to gratify. It was outrageously long-legged, and at the same time bench-legged behind, sturdily braced, but not carved. The top of it was a wide oaken board, more than two inches thick and covered with heavy leather fastened down with large square-headed brass nails. The ends were dished in, making sharp angles at the corners. There was a row of shallow, wide cabinets at the back with another narrow, thick board above them that jutted over a trifle, like the grim brow of a thought, bitterly real and old. No drawer under the top for papers. I never saw a thing that looked so much like a principle, and as if it had been built for a giant who had only one idea in a

lifetime, and that a brief one, which required very little space to store it away in the written word.

A person seated at this desk faced the door of the living-room, his side to the fire and his back to shelves of fine old ragged books of many faded colors let into the walls of the corner of the room behind him. He would be somewhat in the shadow with the glow of the firelight burnishing him redly on one side of his face.

Late one afternoon I came up through the chilly, starlit dusk to the ranch-house. It was that quiet hour of the day before guests began to assemble for dinner. I picked up a copy of an afternoon paper from the news-stand in the lobby and was about to enter the living-room when I caught sight of a man in there. This was no unusual circumstance, but to me there was something astoundingly unusual about the man. I felt that I knew him about as well as God knew Adam. I had a curious sensation of being in the possessive case. Yet I could not place him; I had no recollection of ever having seen him before. And I was aware, by the way his glance caught me and drifted aside, that he did not recognize me, had no more than a passing sense of my presence as I crossed the room and chose a chair beneath the lamp on the opposite side of the fireplace.

He was sitting before the desk, a huge man, slumped, knees wide apart, shoulders hunched nearly to the ears of his terrific head; bristling black hair, bristling black brows divided by two perpendicular wrinkles above his nose; round, implacable eyes, luminous, eagle-minded, but almost colorless. Lantern jaws, a long chin, nose like a battering-ram, nostrils drawn back, making lines from the corners of them to the corners of his mouth. The lips of this mouth closed so tightly

that one must infer that he had his teeth clenched inside. And over all this a dark, red-tempered skin that rolled into thick wrinkles across a high, square forehead.

I held the paper up for an excuse and went on piecing his looks together, word for word as I remembered them. But how could I remember what I was actually seeing? That question occurred to me — also what was the rest of it? — 'A man astoundingly and forbiddingly ugly, not easily loved, but compelling respect by some powerful quality in his homeliness.' — Where on earth had I seen that quotation, which, somehow, now, I felt was not quite veracious. Still, for purposes of interpretation it might have gone with the countenance of this man. All at once he began to look unreal; not the man, but the copy, very good copy of a man whom I knew to his last thought. But good Heavens! I did not know any such person.

He remained unmindful of me, sitting there on the small of his back thinking himself up. For some unintelligible reason I resented this pose, this manner, everything about him as if he had defrauded me by this lack of recognition.

Then with a sort of lazy leopard movement he reached a hairy fist across the desk, seized a pen, and bunched his stubby fingers around the staff. He watched himself do this, taking the awkward pains of a person no longer accustomed to use a pen, and then began to scratch aimlessly on a sheet of paper, practicing something, not penmanship.

I recognized that fist! I had seen it before, covered with black hairs, fingers bunched around a penstaff, arm stretched across a wider, finer desk, and the thing

posed lying idly upon a blank sheet of paper. My hair almost sat up in amazement. I dropped the paper and regarded him with the strangest emotions, feeling that I had been done out of something that belonged to me, fist and all. It was a very vague impression, but the emotion accompanying it was strong to the point of indignation.

The rustle of the falling paper may have disturbed him, or he was made suddenly aware of my interest. I am of an age and disposition which relieves me of feminine self-consciousness if an occasion arises to study a man, as you may say, in the original. I can irritate him by this stare, but I never seem to flatter him, if you know what I mean. Anyway, this one pulled himself up from behind the desk and left the room without casting a glance in my direction. I was unaccountably annoyed. My mind clung to his coat-tails in futile authority, as if he owed me an explanation, an apology, or some kind of conciliatory recognition.

It was on the tip of my tongue to detain him with some such exclamation as this: 'Wait a moment! I have had dealings with you. You owe me something. What is it?'

But I have learned to restrain my natural impulses, no matter how brilliant they are in case they should prove unintelligible to the other person. I am not above holding up a man, if I know what I ought to do with him, as this record will show later on, but I did not know what might happen if I halted this one. I did not even know his name. The only charge I had against him was a sort of befuddled indignation, which embarrassed me. I had been ill a long time. Suppose I had gone 'nutty' about some fancied wrong a stranger had

done me! People with addled brains were always inventing grievances. I began to be alarmed about myself.

All this wavering of thought and suspicion covered no more than a moment. Then my attention was again arrested by the conversation going on at the clerk's desk in the lobby, plainly audible through the open door of the living-room. The stranger who had gone out there was discussing the country roundabout. Yes, very beautiful, I heard him tell the clerk. Yes, he was having a good wide-open-to-the-air rest. And he needed it. Been very closely confined for a number of years, and so on and so forth. Then I heard him ask who such and such a guest was that was stopping at the hotel. The clerk told him, and added the names of one or two celebrities with polite pride, as much as to imply that people who stopped there were at least in the neighborhood of excellent company.

'Do you know who the woman is in there?'

'No.'

'That's Corra Harris,' he explained, and I knew he would go on to say that she was the author of 'A Circuit Rider's Wife,' because, if I wrote a thousand books better or just as good, I can never get beyond the fame earned by this first one.

'Author of "A Circuit Rider's Wife." Have you read it, Mr. Puckle?'

'Puckle!' My memory shouted. 'Puckle, but, merciful Heavens! how does he come to be in the flesh?'

Followed a silence in the lobby, then I heard footsteps, very light ones, springy and quick: caught a glimpse of Puckle as he passed the door on his way out. We exchanged glances. I say nothing of mine, but if

Adam looked at His Creator with such a wide-open stare of fear, he need not have been at such pains to lay the blame on Eve about eating that apple. I never saw such two capital letters of guilt and fear in the human face as that man's eyes showed.

I sprang to the window in time to see him turn the corner of the house going toward the railway station. This was the last seen or heard of Puckle at Miramar.

I shall always believe that he had been a very able bandit or doubtful profiteer who had served his sentence and was now enjoying his loot in the first wide-open-out-of-door rest since the doors of the penitentiary closed upon him.

Seven years ago I wrote a book entitled 'The Eyes of Love.' The leading character in it was not the hero, but a rugged old lawyer named 'Puckle' who made things work together fiercely for other people's good in that story. I got the name he wore from the 'Agony Column' of the 'London Morning Post,' to which I subscribed for some years, not so much for the stale and classically written news it contained, as for the harvest of names I reaped from its 'Agony Column,' sometimes endearing, sometimes enhancing, and sometimes humorous, but always suitable for the kind of heroes and heroines I like to create. 'Puckle,' if I remember correctly, was the name of a good old butler in a distinguished English family, and it was the fifteenth year after his death that I saw his name and virtues resurrected in the 'Agony Column' of the 'London Morning Post.' The sound of it tickled my imagination, and I gave it to this old bachelor lawyer who had come up like a horned bull from the lower walks of respectable society in an old-fashioned Southern city.

On the fifteenth page of the novel called 'The Eyes of Love' may be found an exact description of the man I saw that day at Miramar including his fist, which, if I remember, is photographed and interpreted a page or two farther on.

This is all I have to say. I make no definite assertion about being the author and creator of that man. The whole thing may have been a coincidence, but if so, why did this Puckle in the flesh, whom I had created out of an ink-bottle and my own long-legged imagination, take to his heels when he recognized me as being the author of that book where Puckle figures so admirably?

Most authors of any reputation hear of the activities of their doubles here and there. And I have had embarrassing experiences with at least four of these, but if there is any other author in this country who has ever met one of his own fictitious characters, taken so literally from one of his romances and made to live even to the last gesture in real life, I should like to know it. This is not a challenge. Far be it from me to give myself airs in this matter, but I am broadcasting an S.O.S. call to members of the literary profession to proclaim similar experiences if they have had them, because until I prudently left off telling this tale my reputation as a simple-minded, truth-telling romanticist suffered a frightful deflation.

Weather conditions inside a room are always more or less artificial. The walls of it limit space too much, considering what long elbows the winds have. There are no clouds in the ceiling, no rains fall from it. The sun does not shine there. By turning on the heat,

closing a door, or opening a window, you can regulate the climate. And there is no possible way for all the weather to get in and dramatize itself.

I had lain for two months in such a room at Miramar, with nothing but the furniture, my own things, my own nature, and no more than a south and west view of the earth, sea, and sky.

Like other invalids I assumed that the seasons were going on as usual on the outside. But when at last I was able to get out and take a look around, I perceived that something was wrong, something necessary and familiar to me was not on the programme.

Besides the brief journey I made to the ranch-house late in the afternoon, I did most of my convalescing sitting in the lacy shadows of a palm tree just beyond the door of my cottage. Every day I saw the same tall gorgeous flowers blooming everywhere without a single rest or skip in the color scheme. The wind did not come hurrying up; it was always there, blowing just so. The sun was absolutely sure to shine. That cloud which passed over early every morning was not a cloud, but a fog, and never a drop of rain fell from it. Nothing happened in the heavens above me.

I was enchanted with this brisk bright weather, until I realized that it was not weather at all, but mere atmosphere. Then I grew restless as we do at a play when the same 'act' lasts too long. The stately white lilies, the pretty boughs of languishing fuchsia bells above my cottage door, those stodgy bushes covered with a petticoat of Shasta daisies, the brilliant blue and yellow flowers — all bored me. I used to come out in the morning hoping that something like a little old scrawny bachelor's-button had sneaked up during the

night and popped open in this affluence of splendid blooms. I wanted to rest my overcrowded eyes upon a poor little stingy stunted flower that had had a hard time surviving the heat and cold of tyrannical weather. I thought of the ragged robins at home standing up gayly like small bright faces in the summer rain. I remembered the zinnias and marigolds, as one recalls the pictures in an album of old-fashioned relatives.

More than anything else I missed the groggy thunderheads boiling up over the skyline, the little showers we have at home, the sound of the rain marching over the hill, the brisk rattle-tat-tat! it made on the roof of the old cabin, the fragrance of the dampened dust after a drought. All this accomplished by the hurry and scurry we would be making to bring in this, that, and the other before anything got wet. Somebody flying around in the house pulling down windows, screaming to some one else to know if the windows upstairs were closed, and if not — good Heavens! — flying feet on the stairs! Then the roar of the wind, heard a mile away, now upon us, the ragged storm-sheet of cloud bellying overhead, rent while we looked at it by a blinding flash followed by a deafening crash of thunder — which always sends the dog under the bed, and maybe one of us, nameless here, into the darkest corner with her fingers in her ears for safety against so much noise! Torrents of rain after that, roses bending like drenched ladies in a flood, vines swinging like green draperies around the cabin, trees reeling, shouting, drunken with the rhythm of terrific motion, like music meant by Byron's grandest poetry. In short, drama, my friends! black, bright, swift, and terrifying, without the need of our paltry greatest words to interpret it!

I was not wishing for a storm like this. Any little disturbance of the elements would have satisfied me, but accustomed as I have been all my life to temperamental weather, and to the practicing of my anxieties about what it might or might not do, I missed the excitement in this bland bright land where it never changes or surprises you, nor does anything at all. My feeling is that it may be similar to that of Paradise, which, I have always had a hunch, would pall on me after, say, the first week of Eternity.

I am not complaining of the atmosphere in California, you understand, for it is perfect. But the weather is simply hog-tied, if you know what I mean. They can and do plan a picnic out there three years ahead without ever being disappointed about inclement weather when the day rolls around.

I stood it as long as I could without saying anything, but when by asking a few discreet questions I discovered myself to be the only person who expected any change in the sky scenery for a year to come, I resolved to leave quietly and unobtrusively, without saying what was the matter, go farther up, or farther down, where real weather began.

A circumstance which quickened the pulse of my departure was the fact that, while the upper elements remained static, the earth beneath did not. More frequently in the darkest, stillest hours of the night the windows of my cottage would begin to shiver and the whole house would have a rigor.

My preparations were brief, and consisted only in employing a seamstress for a day to take up the hems of all my frocks an inch or two. I had left the Valley directly almost for the West and had had no oppor-

tunity to observe that virtue in women had taken a turn for the better, tucked up its skirts and lengthened its stride. For in our mountains neither manners, morals, nor styles change with the changing winds of fashion. So I had started on my Happy Pilgrimage draped to my toes as usual according to the ideals of feminine modesty in that former generation to which I belong, you may say, not only chronologically, but so far as my skirts are concerned. But one of the first things I discovered in the West was that women believed publicly and pridefully in their legs — not only the young ones; all of them did, even the noblest and best!

I was not shocked, far from it! I experienced a sort of happy-legged gladness that I had not enjoyed since childhood. And I may as well confess here as later that during the nine months spent in California I shortened my skirts three times, proceeding carefully in this matter, as Mother used to do when she would be taking off our winter flannels. She cut them off, say, six inches at the time until only the breastplate, so to speak, remained to protect us from taking a 'chest cold' in case of a late frost. So I had my skirts shortened a little at a time, because I simply lacked the heroic courage of this modern age to bob them brief enough at one sitting! The only long stuff I cling to now, with the prim pride peculiar to my sex in its original state, is my hair, which is not very long nor very thick, but of sufficient length and volume to twist up behind and make a sedate, old-fashioned declaration of my gender.

But whatever may be said of bobbed hair, short skirts are no passing fad of fashion. They are an indication of the mental and moral evolution of women

into comfortable characters of their own. My secret suspicion is that it was some designing woman — no better than she should be, probably thin-shanked or with elliptical instead of parallel extremities — who wore the first long skirt. Then the mischief was done. A tradition of modesty was built up about this outrageously suggestive garment on account of the simplicity of our forbears, who took up with the idea to outwit the snooping curiosity of men — only to increase it! Now, thank Heavens, they are deprived of the opportunity for exercising it by the frank and gladsome proclamation we are making of these stems of our being. The same thing is true of corsets and all the other crinoline and straight-jacket methods they imposed by suggestion for imprisoning us. And all for no better purpose than to afford a false stimulus to their masculine curiosity. We shall have more freedom, better health, and a sense of decency not imposed upon us by the vulgar modesty of foolish people of either sex.

I remember distinctly when the prison-house of long skirts closed upon my lanky young legs. I was a gawky girl of thirteen gadding about the old plantation, a happy young human yearling, when suddenly without warning my mother ripped the hems out of all my frocks, added superfluous ruffles, and let them down to my shoe-tops. I remember how miserable and embarrassed I was, what a time she had teaching me to take short steps, and never, whatever I did, to take the least chance again of revealing my legs. I remember how these plagued garments were made longer and wider, then narrower, but never shorter, until, as a 'Circuit Rider's Wife,' a mother, and a Christian woman without

style or liberty, they trailed behind me and showed no more than the toes of my shoes in front. For more than forty years I never stepped up or down anywhere, never crossed a muddy street, without exercising the absurdest care about concealing even my ankles, lest I should be guilty of the immodesty of lifting my skirts a trifle too high! It makes me furious to think what slaves we were to this false sense of propriety when now it turns out that there is nothing more indecent about exposing our legs than showing our noses!

It seems to me that I have said earlier in this chronicle something similar to what I am now about to say again. But if by chance you have made a good point, why not repeat it from time to time, especially if you have reached the age of vain repetitions that old people frequently do enjoy. I have known young ones, for that matter, who told the same tale over many times even when it was never worth telling at all. Therefore I am reminding you again that when you are traveling for pleasure, never make up your mind which way you will go until you are ready to start. Then, if you are not disposed to change it at the last moment, the indications are that you are still 'in gear' as a slavishly consistent human being and in no mood to enjoy yourself. By all means obey the impulse to go in the opposite direction, even if it overtakes you at the ticket window; or as you step into your limousine — if you belong to that class — and can afford to travel in your 'private car' by any dirt-road route in creation to the very ocean's edge.

Just so, while the obliging seamstress pressed my frocks and packed my things, I went out and sat under the palm tree to make up my mind which way I should

fly. The idea of returning home did not occur to me. The truth is that for nine months after I came to California I was not physically able to make the trip back home. I was very sensible about that; if I could not travel three thousand miles, I was still equal to going farther in short laps of from a hundred to five hundred miles. My idea was to keep going. And I still insist that it would have been the safest way around the world home if I had not been obliged to save the seas and these farther continents until I should mend more and become seaworthy.

By the same token I dared not accept invitations. I was not equal to the arduous pleasantness of being a guest. My temper was too uncertain and my breath too short for this laughing, vocative pastime. As it was, I finally made this mistake: I spent a happy week with friends in Berkeley just before leaving California and was rapturously entertained by them and their friends. Then I went to pieces on the morning of my departure, and I can only hope they thought the fretted fan-tailed figure I made of myself was due to fatigue. In truth it was caused from a severe seismic disturbance morally. I had received the gift of a bottle labeled 'Grape Juice' from a friend just before I left Santa Rosa on the previous Sabbath Day. Now, when I was packing my trunk to leave Berkeley, it suddenly occurred to me that this bottle was too ornamentally sealed to be mere grape juice. Besides, written delicately in pencil I beheld this cryptic information, '15 years old.' Why should grape juice be so carefully aged? The conviction settled upon me that the stuff must at least be fine old port, and it might be even more valuably worse. Followed a battle royal between

me and my nobler, God-fearing, law-abiding self. I was torn to shreds nervously between the purely worldly ambition to have a bottle of fine California wine, and to do right as usual, while my host and hostess waited patiently downstairs holding the truckman at bay while I finished packing the trunk. Once in so often they called up to know if I was ready. And I would answer back more and more irritably that I should be in a moment. Then I would sit down, regard the bottle, and go on with this struggle between this upper and nether millstone of my conscience. Finally, in desperation, when it was apparent to me that everybody downstairs, including the truckman, was coming upstairs, I thrust the bottle in a pasteboard cylinder, already occupied by an engraving of George Washington, stuffed a pair of stockings into each end of it, crammed it into the hatbox of my trunk, and slammed the lid down just in time to receive them at the door — but without the look of a high-born lady and a grateful guest.

At the station I accompanied my host, who was going gallantly to attend to the checking of this trunk, and I capped the climax by telling the baggage-man to be careful with that trunk, 'because it has a bottle of liquid in the hatbox,' I explained.

I forgot my deed until an hour after I had reached the Biltmore in Los Angeles. Then the porter called up on the telephone. The moment he identified himself I felt the pallor of guilt cool my face. He wanted to know if this was Mrs. Harris speaking. I admitted that it was *a* Mrs. Harris speaking, cautiously implying that it would not please me to take upon myself the risk of being any Tom, Dick, and Harry of any other Mrs.

Harris who might be stopping in this hotel. He said my trunk was there, and should he bring it up.

'Is it in good order?' I demanded, so tremblingly that my voice must have sounded raucous with authority. He assured me that it was, from which I inferred there were no darkly incriminating wine-stains upon it and agreed to receive it.

This bottle and the picture of the glorious father of my country rested undisturbed in that cylinder in the hatbox of my trunk until a week later, when I was at last ready to start upon the long journey home. Then I took it out and placed it in my traveling-bag.

I cannot tell whether it was the heat of the desert through which we were passing or the debilitating sense of guilt from which I suffered, but I was near to being ill again. And I was by that bottle of wine as Eugene Aram was about the body of the man he had slain. Every night I shifted it to some other article of my hand-baggage. We were approaching Yuma when I realized that I could not bear the strain any longer. As we left the place I stood on the back platform of the observation car and christened Yuma as if it had been a battleship by slinging that bottle of wine as far as I could send it. I saw it crash and spray bright blood on the rails behind us, and felt much better. But to this day I cannot be certain whether I was moved to purge myself of a bootlegger's sin by the voice of conscience or the fear of detection. Anyway, I rose to my higher nature by hook or crook. One can never afford to be boastful about how he rises. The main thing is to do it.

But all this happened nearly six months later. I was sitting under the palm tree outside the door of my cottage at Miramar trying to decide which way to go

CORRA HARRIS'S NIECE CORRA HOPE

when memory led me off on this tangent. The wisest thing to do was to make a short journey in search of weather — any kind of weather, so it should not be mere atmosphere. And firmer foundations in the earth — anywhere so it did not shake in the dead hours of the night. I preferred to go where I should be completely out of drawing with the existing situation, which is as good a way to break new grounds in the mind as I have ever tried.

That same moment 'Hollywood!' rose before me like a one-word prospectus of something dangerous to know. I had a nimble ambition to go there. The next train left in forty minutes. I was aboard, bound for what I firmly believed to be the Equator of Folly in this country.

VI

We may make a happy pilgrimage and feel reasonably blessed by the adventure; but after it is all over there are various circumstances which require more explanation than if we had remained dolorously at home.

My idea is to use up all my own personal copy, leave no stone of a deed unturned, and to clinch the whole thing with my own interpretation. You cannot tell what may happen to you when the lives of great men all remind us of what biographers can do to them. I was never in that class; still somebody with a biographical animus might come along after I have retired from this present world, rake up the discards I have made in living here, publish them, and destroy any happy illusion posterity might otherwise entertain of me as a worthy person — not, you understand, in his effort to be damnably truthful for conscience' sake, but to select those petty truths to tell that would be the least enhancing to my memory, or to accomplish the same effect by perverting my best traits according to his own disillusioned mind. The fact that he is an interesting biographer is no proof that he is a gentleman or even an honest man. As a rule he is less subject than any other writer to the charm of the character he portrays — as an autobiographer is most easily hoodwinked by the same. I suppose this is because the latter has more at stake, poor soul, while the former may be as meanly veracious as he pleases without suffering the damaging consequences. For example, I should be embarrassed in my very dust if some primitive cast

the spotlight of sex on my memory and accounted for my best virtues as being the result of suppressed gender. I have experienced great hardship in acquiring them and deserve more credit than such a Boswell would have the honor to give. They are all too maliciously inclined to explain away the heroic elements in human character as being some kind of twisted natural phenomenon.

Observe what one of our cleverest writers has lately done to tarnish the good name of George Washington, not, I suppose, because he had any grievance against the father of his country, but to tar a great man's fame with the bootlegger's brush in order to reduce him to the level of a modern tippler who violates the law to obtain his liquor. Washington drank like a gentleman in an age when it was not dishonorable for a gentleman to drink. Now it is. That is the difference. Washington probably kept a cow and drank milk, but nobody is concerned to prove that, because there is no moral turpitude attached to the drinking of milk.

We become erudite in looking up shady precedents only when we have transgressions to defend. Heaven deliver us all from the researching activities of such people! They have a bad taste for knowledge concerning others acquired in their own defense, and they are unscrupulous in their methods for obtaining and using such information.

Therefore, it behooves the humblest of us to leave some kind of rebuttal evidence of our decencies, lest some local biographer should make the worst of us in spite of our epitaphs.

I have written such a record in 'My Book and Heart' and the other 'Circuit Rider' stories, with as much

luminosity as my moral vanity could shed upon it. But this is another kind of tale with the scenes laid helter-skelter, far from those earlier scenes and influences which formed my character and enslaved me. It records the faint, prim, absurd, and somewhat courageous adventures I had last year when I led a sort of private world movement in my own behalf. The whole adventure was based upon the doctrine so admirably set forth in that noble but theoretical instrument, the Declaration of Independence, that we are entitled to life, liberty, and at least a sort of traveling pursuit of happiness. I wanted to practice the thing and find out what would happen, as a little boy takes his first chew of tobacco to find out whether he will survive it and become a man. If I get a bad name by recording my experiences, I will give it to myself. No biographer shall do it, because I shall not leave enough unsaid to afford him the opportunity.

What I am coming to right now is this, that there actually may be something wrong with me because I am not drawn to eminently respectable and incontestably good men and women. They are dull people, however vocative, and short on personal charm. In my meaner moments I have even entertained the suspicion that they are so infernally wise that they have found out that it is not quite moral to be attractive. They want to be loved and honored as you do the Holy Scriptures, something like that, when you know their very flesh-and-mortal mind makes them too fallacious to be accepted on that grand basis — besides, who wants to go around with the Bible clasped to his bosom. We must respect them and we are glad to trust them, but I defy anybody really to like them. Personally their

effect upon me is always quenching. I never could tell such a woman how I feel, nor such a man what I really think, not even if he was my pastor. I have a hunch that he would not know how to compute me. He has a sour jaw, if you know what I mean, a too Godly eye to be in a mortal man's head, and he lacks that little adding machine of charity and understanding which he would need if I should be the sum he was doing on the thing, but he has installed as one of his severer virtues a sort of subtracting machine which in the remainder would leave very little of me to praise.

This may be due to the sense of guilt with which I am endowed, like a backhand talent, for all I know, but I am just telling you there is something frightfully antipathetic in that man's goodness from my point of view. He does not know enough, only the best things, ripe on one side, green on the other; he thinks he must shun the very knowledge of evil, although evil is at least half the scriptures of man, and much good is to be derived from understanding them. But he sticks like a scholar and a gentleman to just the classical sins of Abraham and David. He is finicky morally, I say, the kind of man we all recognize æsthetically, who would not sit down to a table where a fly gets there first and is already on the rim of his butter-plate, because he has read something awful about flies, who would not eat the good part of a rotten specked apple — that kind of person, a neurasthenic nursing himself in the Kingdom of God as he pecks around delicately in the society of men. He goes on growing more and more upright about nothing at all, because the Almighty Himself could not bring him to grips with a real temptation (as he tried out Job — and a lot of the rest of us!), until

by a process of elimination and ignorance he is completely out of touch with his fellow men and thinks his loneliness is due to the nobler life he has lived, when, as a matter of fact, it is due to moral cowardice and a lack of sense. God surely makes us, but not like that!

On the other hand, I hope no one will think I am giving myself airs when I confess that I have always taken a sort of homely interest in wickedness. To me it is queer bright stuff sometimes, and the glamour of it attracts me. I have tried to understand the charm it frequently imparts, as something I need to burnish the dullness of my virtues. Virtues must have their bright side. How do we so frequently miss it? Surely the good God would not impose upon us a set of attributes and clinch them with the Ten Commandments, just to make us safe people to deal with in this world and fit for the next one, when the practice of them makes us somber figures except in a holy procession. Surely flowers are not so bad because they are so lovely to behold without making you feel pious at all. Nothing that He made is ugly. Why then do we make ourselves ugly so often with goodness?

I have known many holy men and women who made a sweetness and light of themselves very different from the lean-souled man I copied in awhile ago, but I never could bear one for keeps. Their note is too high; it gets to be a falsetto in living. And I never could provoke one into a state of mortal retaliation; no matter how wrong I might be in my contention, she would go on bearing with me. When all is said, the thing I loved most in Lundy was his humanness, the way he could wolf up and take one down a peg or two. He never allowed any one dear to him to get by with the wrong

deed or the wrong idea. He had a sword of a tongue such as no mere mortal braggart would have the skill to use. It was the kind of rapier he used for plucking out eyes and cutting off right hands if either one offended, no matter whether they were his own or yours.

This is what I want to know. Is there no golden lovely mean between the incontestably good, who are not very interesting, and the damnably bad, who so frequently are? I have worked on that proposition for years with all the astronomical passion of a Galileo, though, of course, with less arithmetical talent for computing immeasurable distances. The only thing I have discovered for certain is that goodness, honor, and virtues do not make any man or woman lovable unless these qualities are warmed, flavored, and vitalized by their humanness. The same thing is true of wickedness. It never makes any man hateful until it dehumanizes him, and I admit that evil tends in that direction. Still these people do get by with a lot more meanness than we can afford. Not only that, but it seems to endear them, especially to truly good people. The last one of us will forgive a sinner his sin sooner than we would overlook the shortcoming of a saint. The whole Christian world has been yearning over them and trying to save them for centuries. Don't tell me this is due to the quality of Christian charity: we simply had that fund which we must spend on them. The truth is that they are very attractive people. Jesus Himself loved them more than he did other people, not because their wickedness attracted Him, but because He really was divine, unprejudiced, and knew, what very few of us ever understand, that there is something ineffably lovely and effulgent about

humanness. If you can clarify one of them by his transgressions, he is worth more than a saint who never had any. And I will stick to it till the end that, if the wearisomely righteous would take a little more care to stay honestly human, they need not necessarily become wicked. The trouble with us is we are fools of fear and have not enough faith or stamina to take the chance of lighting up our virtues in the flesh as these scandalous ones know how to do, even with their vices.

Maybe I am wrong about all this. It does not sound orthodox, but carnal-minded. That's also my point — we are carnal-minded. We were made so and will be so as long as we are in the flesh in this present world, and it actually makes me uneasy to think what I will do without mine in the next. I am simply trusting the Lord to make me more interesting spiritually. But does any saint think he is not using his carnal mind when he puts it on the life and deeds of a sinner? Why not use it more profitably to find out why the sinner is so much more attractive than he is? — unless he wants to admit that his wickedness makes him so, and have done with it. For my part I will concede nothing of the sort. I have a decent horror of evil. What I want to do is to humanize my virtues and be as attractive as that scamp is. I am certain it can be done if I only knew how.

This, as near as I can tell it, is the process of thought by which I arrived at the idea of going to Hollywood. It was like an inspiration, not to 'go wrong,' but to go to school late in life. I had heard much about the untoward conduct of the leading people of that place and I have had little opportunity in my life to study wickedness rampant. My plan was to sit down quietly and

meekly on that bright rim of perdition, look at it carefully, and find out if possible why perdition is bright.

I arrived late and went to the Hollywood Hotel. This place reminded me of a fine old family that used to be rich and gay, but which has now fallen in fortunes. There was an air of former grandeur about the long series of drawing-rooms downstairs. They were wide and splendid, with fine draperies, but faded; lofty arches; huge casement windows open with the wind blowing through; bowls of gorgeous flowers everywhere, quietness, nobody there. I concluded that the night life had not begun. Why do we associate 'night life' with the gayer forms of perdition when students and slaves make up more of it than any other class of people?

I went upstairs to my room. Romantically speaking, it was not a room, but an immense chamber with many windows and a kind of Juliet gallery overlooking an inside court filled with flowers and palm trees, birds singing out there in the swinging spires of slender cedars, a fountain playing. Certainly the setting was good, I concluded.

If you are young and beautiful, you can afford to wear the latest modes in clothes, however bizarre, but if you are a stodgy, comfortable, elderly person ambling along in your middle fifties, it is silly to dress in this manner. You lose your value, your tone of time, that mellowness of blurred lines which is one of the assets age bequeaths. If you try to appear 'stylish,' you look like an old piece of a good period which has been retouched and outrageously varnished.

For all these reasons I was satisfied with my dinner frock of a former season, sleek black satin, severely cut.

The skirt had been shortened, to be sure, but this was not a concession to style, only a sort of nether proclamation I made of life, liberty, and the right to step as far as I pleased. The contrast, I knew, would be noticeable and becoming to me when I went down to dine where every one else would be so modishly dressed that to be ultra-fashionable was to be commonplace. My appearance would not be that of a successful screen star, but I should come in like the peaceful, kind old person I am. And I should be calmly conscious of the difference I made personally in this anxiously primped crowd of men and women whose livelihood depends upon looking better than they feel.

Can you see me carrying on this enhancing colloquy with myself as I made that toilette for my début in Hollywood, sticking up my hair to grim high lines, putting on a little rouge, then rubbing it off, not for conscience' sake, but for the same reason that Queen Victoria probably eschewed the paint-pot. She was not pretty, poor soul, but she had a noble countenance. My grandmother resembled her, and I am said to resemble my grandmother. Therefore, in my grander moments of vanity I scorn rouge, expose my forehead, and leave the lines Nature made to define me. We are all actresses, my dears, if we are women, whether we are on the stage or off of it. Saint or sinner, smart woman or fool, we make little plays for ourselves and practice them in secret, before the mirror, or sobbing on the bed. How else could even the best of us have endured the dullness of the last ten thousand years if we had not been private playwrights in our own behalf? Lovers do not last long. We live years and years without romance. Husbands, however kind and faith-

ful, are like curtains that fall between us and the audience every maiden has by the very act of living and being herself. Children are joys and cares who destroy us. The world never knew us. Nobody raises much of a monument to our memory. We must make out somehow in secret, then, to be our own heroine, recite a few fine lines to the image we cast in the glass. No harm is done, and we are faintly refreshed by the character we think we are in these little dramas.

That evening was a fiasco, so far as I was concerned, if it is to be judged by the sensation I made. No one noticed me. Still I had the comfortable assurance that, if any of them ever did, they would wonder who the woman was sitting in the corner with that good old wedding-ring look on her face. Still projecting my scenes, you observe, and occupying the center of my own inside stage! There is no great difference in human experience. It is the way you tell it, or the way you feel it, that makes the difference in *you*. You may be in a mean little hole of life and wail like a coward to heaven for succor, but if you cast yourself in big terms like these —

> No retreat, no retreat,
> They must conquer or die
> Who have no retreat —

then you arrive at the hero consciousness of yourself and nothing else matters. You can always make the grade inside even if you do not advance a step.

I think this explains the whole problem of class distinction. The difference between classes and masses is not determined by living conditions, poverty, or wealth, but by the sense these people have of themselves. It is

a matter of taste, and manners, the quality of courage they have. A man may swear equality, fight for recognition, but, if he feels inferior, nothing in mind, wealth, or philosophy can cure him of this ignoble complex.

Working people are not barred from the best society because of their coarse clothes and grimy faces, nor even on account of their radical opinions — some very elegant men and women hold the same opinions — but they are unendurable because they lack breeding, not culture. They are without the right telepathy toward the sensibilities of others, which is the genius of good will, the basis of that 'gentleman's agreement' which even well-bred enemies never violate. I have known more than one man who was unendurable socially, not because he picked his teeth and spat on the floor, but because he had no more than a fool's perception of other people. He added the culture of two universities to his natural idiom, acquired honors as an erudite scholar, and inherited a fortune without ever being able to 'enter in.' It was his lack of taste as a human being that queered him. He was artlessly obvious in choosing his friends from among those who despised him, because he liked the luster they shed and he was always for shining in some false light of himself.

Taste in the best of us is a sweet meekness very close kin to an honorable pride. One of its qualities is a gentle recognition of others as being in the majority. They always are! Such people are the only ones in this world who can remain gracefully and contentedly in the rear of all pomp and circumstance. Some of them do pass the whole of their lives there in placid satisfaction without ever being recognized and invited to come forward and take part in the ceremony of being prominent.

I have known many women who were the anxious counterparts of this man. They may move frantically in the best society without ever being of it. They are the rich, beautifully dressed, and efficient maidservants of polite society who work hard to hold their positions. They are the good little coupons such society cashes in extravagant hospitality and contributions to fashionable charities — all for the pathetic pleasure of being 'among the prominent.' Sometimes, even frequently, they weed a wide row in women's public-spirited enterprises and achieve an outrageous prominence, but they never belong to the social element which they espouse, whether they are well-born or lowly bred. Their fault and foolishness is that they have a sense of inferiority which is inexcusable in a respectable person. I have always suspected Alexander was afflicted with it when he wept for 'more worlds to conquer.' Achieving eminence and conquering worlds never cures the inferiority complex. They always weep for more, poor things, because they have no inward sense of elevations. The most charming, brilliant, and elegantly conceited men and women I have ever known were in the rear ranks of society — not in it, nor of it.

But let that go. I am simply trying to qualify as gracefully as possible for the retiring position I took up at Hollywood.

I was a total stranger there, and remained almost so to the end. It was not a place where stories like 'The Recording Angel' or A Circuit Rider's Wife' would ever be selected for a motion picture. The fact is it is the place where a young Hebrew wrote a slap-stick comedy with a fade-out at the end of Jesus Christ, and sold it for five thousand dollars. The thing was never

put on the market, but neither was it possible to convince the smart young author that he had committed a breach of good manners to mankind, whatever their religious creeds or lack of them might be. The last I heard of him he still believed the thing would have 'made a killing' if it had been put on the market. It would have. It would have destroyed the commercial future of a very popular motion-picture corporation.

But let that go too! If you have written a score of books and none of them are suitable for the screen, you must account for your failure as people usually handle their sour grapes, simply by intimating that your prospective purchaser does not know good grapes when he sees them.

I was still a trifle infirm on my feet and spent the first days of my sojourn at Hollywood sitting in the cool, quiet corners of the hotel reading the topical outlines of people who came and went. I was able almost at once to distinguish between professional actors and the rest of us who only act in private life. The former had more expression. Along with their other clothes they put on a look, if you know what I mean, incisive, definite like the sleek photographs used by the press. There was one man — I shall never forget him — the sight of him affected me like great music. His face gave the impression of a vast scene a long way off where a terrible tragedy had been enacted, and, for once, the hero survived with the great lines of it written in his countenance. If Prometheus had strode in dragging the chains of his broken fetters, approached the desk, and asked for his mail, my epic feeling could not have been more outraged. Why didn't he ask for Fire in capital letters, or a thunderbolt, something commensurate

with that noble deed of a face he was wearing! Instead, he always received a handful of matinée letters and strode out with a grand look of satisfaction. He was really a third-rate actor on the bargain counter of the motion-picture industry, employed now and then when somebody must appear in the background of a bright scene looking like the devil in a grouchy, devastating mood, or like a terribly vengeful saint who had been wronged by the star in the play. No really great man could have afforded to look so noble as this fellow had learned how to look.

This is the difference between art and truth. The first is no more than a great or a mean imitation of the latter. And there can be no more fatal mistake in character, whether of a nation or a man, than the worship of art instead of plain truth. It leads to the same kind of mimicry this man practiced in his face with no truth in him to justify it. It insensibly substitutes the imitations of the truth men make by portraying greatness, honor, heroism, beauty, and all the vices. However well they do it, it is not the real thing. This is the reason why civilizations that advance in the fine arts and appreciation of them are in grave danger of decadence.

The real glitter of the motion-picture world is obscured in Hollywood, you may say, by the film industry. One can only behold that firmament of stars — and shooting stars — in all its glory at the Biltmore in Los Angeles and at the Ambassador. But I am one of the humbler students of human nature and these lesser bodies I saw at the old Hollywood Hotel seem to me to be the astronomical A, B, C's of that profession. They might arrive later, but right now they were still

below the horizon of fame or they had 'set' as stars and were now no more than wage-earners on the screen.

Among those who dined there was a lovely dark young creature who did not dance, but invariably held aloof like a pretty 'aside' in the gay crowd. Her hair was bobbed and black as a raven's wing; face round as a child's, jasmine skin, rosebud mouth, short upper lip, what some romantic critics call a 'darling little nose,' neatly lined up; singularly soft brown eyes that looked as if they had seen everything, got used to the best and to the worst, and now had that forgiving look of the very good — the most remarkable pair of eyes I had ever seen in a young person's face. She wore entrancingly girlish frocks and managed a sweet repose of manner which was alluring in a scene where there was more drama than repose. Everybody made a point of greeting her with a sort of gentle politeness, which would be the end of their attentions. No man asked this lovely dark rose of a woman to dance, though she had feet as slender as lilies and really poetic legs. I could not make out her relations to the situation, although it was apparent that she was an actress who could register one pose after another, feature perfect of youth, without the animation of youth.

She was the only one of that bright company who ever took the least notice of me. She invariably sent me the signal of a smile and a nod when she caught sight of me in my amen corner at the evening frolic. If there was a moment's break in the ranks of the dancers, and she caught my eye, she tossed me one of her small rosebud smiles. Sometimes she came down early in the evening before the crowd gathered, seated herself virginly upon the piano stool, looked heavenward in spite

of the ceiling and played snatches of light tunes, but she never sang. On these occasions she would glance endearingly over her shoulder at me, and I would give her the approval of a wide-smiling maternal look. I was drawn to her as motherly elderly women are to a girl who is 'not like other girls' of whatever period it is. And I was certain the dear young thing wanted to know me better, but was deterred from the boldness of joining me by the diffidence the young sometimes feel about approaching a dignified old person whom they only suspect of being pleasant, but do not know for sure on account of the severity of her upper outline.

Then one day I was amazed to learn, by involuntary eavesdropping in the lobby, that she had just returned from some place where she had had her face 'lifted' in order to take a sedentary rôle in a picture which was about to be made at one of the studios.

These gossips went on discussing her. In ten minutes I had everything but her genealogy. Twenty years she had been on the stage, twenty more in pictures. They reckoned she must be nearly fifty. And how funny she looked now going around with her old husband, 'Beauty and the Beast!' Well, he could not afford to have his face lifted; queer him forever if he lost his tragic wrinkles and that look of noble age. Then I got it that she was the wife of the apocryphal old Prometheus who was so interested in his frivolous mail! They had been married for thirty years, fade-outs really, but they were obliged to go on working, never had saved anything, though both of them had made a lot of money — and so on and so forth.

I was touched to the heart. That poor dear old thing had declassed herself in order to look young on the

screen, though she was fifty years old in mind and spirit, probably had twinges of rheumatism to boot! My own mind kept jumping about, turning her pages, reading her predicament. This was the reason why she did not dance; she didn't feel like dancing, and could not afford to tire those expensively tightened muscles. She could not sing the words to the tunes she played because her voice was cracked and would make a travesty of her youthful appearance if she let it out, and, to be sure, this was also the reason why she did not come and sit beside me, still comfortably relaxed in my wrinkles. She must be seen with girls of whom she was no more than a clever imitation. How she must long for the placid companionship of women of her own age! What an awful fate to be stitched up by a surgeon in the tightened bodice of her own skin so that she could never undress and take a rest from the youth she feigned. I tried to imagine how it would feel, at fifty, to be committed irretrievably to the appearance and mimicry of a young girl, practicing the virgin stare and the coquetry of innocence. It must be frightfully embarrassing.

But what about those elderly fashionable women who are also getting their poor old faces peeled and lifted? What for? There was some excuse for this actress, since she was obliged to tuck the skin of her cheeks to obtain employment. But why do mothers and grandmothers, whose rôles are laid out for them by Nature, get themselves done over like candidates for love and romance? How do such women behave at home, where they have grown old and wrinkled, when they come back looking like artificial dolls? I ask you who have known and managed your husbands for

thirty years by the baleful cut of your eye or the sadly persecuted wrinkling of your forehead at him, how could one of these done-over women look a truant husband in the face and call his attention to the idiocy of losing as much as he did lose the night before playing poker at his club? She could not do it. She has lost her expression for that business. If she acted in character she would be obliged to fling her arms around his neck, weep tragically, and beg him for her dear young sake to eschew the comradeship of profligate companions. Now in view of the circumstances wouldn't he be more amused than penitent? Would not such a husband be always wondering if she had her face 'lifted' for him or the younger, wilder world at large?

If these women act as young as they look, they must seem strangely silly to their grown-up children. If they behave as old as they feel, they are out of character because they have lost the gentle scriptures of love and authority which time prints so endearingly upon a mother's face. What beggary of vanity is this that leads her to exchange them for this faked smoothness of brow and cheek, or that inspired a rickety old sport with a paraffin face to prance forth and give himself the airs of the young blade he used to be? There is something vaguely indecent about counterfeiting youth and all that youth implies when you should have grown into nobler lines of character than young people can ever have.

No one longs for beauty more than I do, but the time has come in my years when I wish for it as a pudgy old lamp of a former period, with a balloon-shaped chimney fluted at the top, might long to be lighted as evening shadows fall and be ready to shine upon the

faces of friends gathered in a safe place. The soul of me would love to be the candle at the window to flicker the world good-night as it goes by in the dark. To me this would be a great privilege in beauty beyond that of mere perishable loveliness, to be remembered by the light of some word I have spoken, by the wind-blown effulgence, however dim, of some sentence I have written, by which the very lonely, lost, and undone might find their way in the dark. I feel that I should know it if such a thing happened, and that I should sit up, white and shining in my little handful of dust, and know myself to be the loveliest thing in this world or the next, a glorified romanticist, justified by faith! (Now let some old wasp-minded theologian cast his spectacles upon that sentence and see what he can make of it! It is nothing really but the bright pollen of a few fine words which I have blown across my hereafter in a fragrant mood. But at last, my dear, what is the soul if it is not a glorified romanticist proved to many by the memories you leave behind you that live and bloom again in sad hearts? And what difference is there between mortality and immortality but this shift of flesh we wear here, so soon worn out? And what are memories but the fragrance or stench we leave behind us that determine the kind of soul we had and still have, world without end?)

At this time 'The Iron Horse' was on in one of the motion-picture theaters near the Hollywood Hotel. I had seen it, a thrilling screen drama showing the construction of the western end of the Great Pacific Railway, and the meeting of the two engines when the whole transcontinental road was finished. I am a trifle unsteady on my historical legs, but it seems to me this

grand celebration took place quite some time after the death of Lincoln. Nevertheless, in the prelude to this picture Lincoln is shown striding back and forth between the two trains shaking hands and congratulating everybody. Not only that, but there was a log-cabin sideshow at the entrance of the theater where the astonished audience might meet this Lincoln in the flesh and hear a spieler eulogize him as he stood up, turned this way and that, for the pop-eyed spectators to observe how remarkably he did resemble the great President. If one can imagine Lincoln with an aldermanic figure, the likeness really was noticeable enough to be particularly horrible. That is one thing you can say for the enterprising spirit of motion-picture producers in Hollywood; they not only take prose license with great poetry, and chronological license with history, they do as they please with the Scriptures. For example, in 'The Ten Commandments,' Moses is represented as a very old man with a long white beard when he fled with the Israelites across the Red Sea, with Pharaoh in hot pursuit. The record is that he was eighty years old then. But my notion is that either years were shorter or men more vigorous in that day. Certainly Moses should have changed some in appearance during those forty years in the wilderness, with a mob of people to rule and lead. Any art, whether portrayed in words, painting, sculpture, or on the screen, is symbolic, designed to suggest the truth. Still the creators in that motion picture, 'The Ten Commandments,' sidestepped the noble veracity of the great symbolism of art when they failed to rise to the demand of portraying a younger, more vigorous Moses in the earlier scenes of that picture. They plagiarized Michelangelo's

Moses from start to finish, while that great statue was designed to serve up the whole life and significance of Moses with that angry, tender, weary face of the man who dealt with all the hardships, terrors, and grief of forty years in the wilderness leading an undisciplined mob, defeated at last with no more than the vision of the Promised Land. The Moses who hurried the Israelites through that perilous break in the waters of the Red Sea with Pharaoh in hot pursuit was a fiercer, abler, younger man than the Moses whose image Michelangelo has pressed like a die upon the imagination of man for ages. But that is what I am telling you about these people; they are plagiarists who have not learned the fine art of plagiarism.

The caricaturing of Lincoln in this prelude to 'The Iron Horse' did not impress me as being such a breach of good manners to the truth and dignity of history as the introduction of a company of live Indian bucks and squaws, who went through their stunts much as they might do at a village carnival, and capped the climax when an old Indian chief held aloft a United States flag while a young warrior gazed at it rapturously and sang, 'My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of Liberty,' etc., which in my opinion was taking a blasted mean advantage of his stupidity when every white man knows that flag is the proud emblem of power that deprived him of his liberties and pensioned him to a life of ignominy.

What I am coming to is that at the foundation head of the motion-picture industry the idea is to thrill, and history be damned, whether sacred or profane! They have no more sensibility about that than fashionable people display when they arrange a costume ball and

choose their characters undiscriminatingly from half a dozen centuries to flirt and dance together.

Now it so happened that every morning about nine o'clock a man appeared in the lobby of the Hollywood Hotel, strode the length of it, and disappeared. He was tall and thin, with black mustache, but hair dashed with gray. He had brown, womanish eyes, the stride of a hero, looked neither to the right nor the left, and gave the impression of carrying his personal pronoun loftily capitalized on top of his head. I bore with him as long as a person in my irascible condition can be expected to bear with such a person. At last, probably about the middle of the second week of my vigil in that hotel, he began to annoy me seriously. My feeling was that no man in our times has that much reason to stretch his pronoun and stride his greatness, because distinction is no longer godlike, and in Hollywood it is one of the cheapest of all human commodities.

I looked him up.

The next morning I was ready for him, sitting in my corner, skirts spread, and stiffly erect, which is a way I have of appearing when I mean business. He appeared as usual to make his transit, but at the moment he faced me in passing, always without seeing me! — I stretched my right arm out full length, crooked my forefinger, and beckoned him. This is a singularly compelling gesture, if you should ever want to try it.

He halted, let go his short upper lip, and stared at me, not only with his eyes, but with his two front teeth. It is a double look. But I was not dismayed.

'Come here, I wish to speak to you,' I said.

He was obliged to do so, though it was apparent that he did not want to come. But I was looking at him as

probably his mother did when he was ten years old and he had been caught scratching on the wall or carving the dining-room table with his jack-knife.

'Are you the author of "The Iron Horse"?' I asked accusingly.

'Yes,' he admitted with no show of modesty or anxiety.

'Are you responsible for the prelude?'

'No! No! Not that!' he exclaimed with, I was gratified to see, real embarrassment.

I expressed my opinion of this prelude with an indignant gift of words that must have impressed him. He said he was glad to assure me that it would be taken off when the picture finished its run in Hollywood.

'And take out that aldermanic travesty of Abraham Lincoln,' I told him.

Then I went on to give him some good advice about writing a scenario of Andrew Jackson, one of the most dramatic figures in the history of his times. He said he would take it up with Constance Talmadge; whereupon I indicated that he might proceed upon his grand tour of the lobby. He bowed, stepped off at a hurried, shorter stride, then, when he was at a safe distance, he half-turned to bestow upon me one of the most scandalized looks I have ever received. But when he perceived that he was still covered, so to speak, with my two-gun gaze, he practically took to his heels. And never again while I was there did he make a striding magnificence of himself in the lobby. I do not say he was afraid to do so. He was probably too discreetly proud to risk the adventure. Even a god might be a bit squeamish about being waylaid by an old person who probably wore the expression of tyrannical adver-

sity. For all I know, he may have been an excessively modest man with a shrinking soul, but I am just telling how he looked, really by way of excusing my attack on him. I had been sitting in that place for nearly two weeks without speaking to any one, and when I did break out, I chose the noblest-looking hero of them all to assault. Whatever may be said of my manners, no one will deny that I showed more courage than the average convalescent of my age usually shows. I did not praise him; I chastened and advised him.

There is a picture made of me during this Hollywood period that I have been at some pains to suppress. I am standing pitch-kneed directly in front of an elephant that has its snout lifted high above my head in what looks like enormous contempt. In this connection I am reminded of what Mary Roberts Rinehart wrote beneath a picture of herself riding a camel, 'This is not the way I expected to look riding a camel.' Just so; that was not the way I cared to look accompanied by an elephant. Nothing, in fact, has ever been farther from my ambition than appearing at all with an elephant. This accounts for the supplicating forward angle of my knees. I had not known that the beast was behind me until I caught sight of that scornfully coiled snout above me, and the camera-man was already busy. It was enough to make the stoutest woman's knees quail. The wonder is that I did not fall down in a dead faint.

I had been invited that day to see the filming of a knock-down, drag-out fight among desperadoes, which I infer was to be a scene in one of those ever-popular Wild West pictures, although as far as I am able to judge no such West exists to-day and such scenes of

blood and death might be more realistically staged in the bootlegger sections of almost any great Eastern city.

The scene laid for this encounter was about a hut in the elbow of a canyon, surrounded on all sides by a forest. The space had been cleared of trees, but the bushes grew thick and apparently sturdy. I do not know the cause of the attack, but it took place with a frightful roar of guns and innumerable hand-to-hand conflicts. Men fell, struggled, and died; others raised themselves upon their elbows at the last gasp and shot their adversaries, who invariably pitched forward on their faces with more agility than I ever imagined the dying possessed, and passed out. I was thrilled to the point of hysteria at the sight of this gigantic struggle between fierce and lawless men. Then suddenly my soul grew calm; my mind sat down and turned up its nose at this farce. For quite by accident my attention was riveted upon the scandalous ease with which these monsters ripped saplings as high as their heads out of the ground and tore up the bushes like prancing tornadoes — without bringing a single root to the surface! Do you get it? Those innocent green boughs had been stuck so lightly into the earth that a small child could have plucked them up! I do not know what the blood was that they shed, but the sight of them lying there gasping in it did not move me. What I saw was actors with beards smeared on their faces dying in a welter of pokeberry juice, shot by blank cartridges, stabbed by tin daggers, lying among fallen boughs such as we used to stick up around our playhouses when we were children.

It was at the moment when the smoke of those futile

guns cleared that somebody led the elephant down the slope behind me and the camera-man turned his camera on us in the only real honest-to-goodness acting on that occasion. Neither the elephant nor I feigned anything.

The filming of this 'desperate' encounter between outlaws, however, illustrates the childish preparations these motion-picture artists make for the illusions they create; also the optical and emotional credulity of the public upon which they successfully depend. A motion-picture factory is like a huge warehouse, where comedies, melodramas, tragedies, and erotic romances may all be in process of production at the same time. Very little space is required for inside scenes and many outside ones. Yet on the screen they may appear wide and splendid. It is the audience that creates its own illusion of distances and spaciousness. It is not even indicated in the picture to the intelligent eye. The place where most of the scenes were made for that famous picture, 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame,' is scarcely a hundred feet square. I was astonished to discover that Valentino, who could look like a tall young god and an even taller sheik on the screen, was far short of the heroic stature in real life and looked a trifle pudgy in a brown business suit. The most popular man-star on the screen to-day is decidedly below medium height, a sort of featherweight athlete in appearance. Though we have seen him many a time in pictures as a tall, slim, young knight. The only motion-picture idols I saw who looked as they do in real life were John Barrymore and Mary Pickford. So we have got to hand it to these psychologists of the human eye. They are the most accomplished highwaymen in the world when it

comes to robbing us of the very sense of distance, depths, and heights.

Divorce is one of the problems of our national life which has been solved by the divorce courts. But the social and moral consequences of divorce appear to lie outside the jurisprudence of these politer courts, and are met like vagrant symptoms in the police and criminal courts, if they reach the acute stage of misdemeanors or murders.

I have given up worrying about this, having reached the conclusion that God alone knows how to handle the consequences of our follies and cowardice. The law is plain, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' And it works, slowly or swiftly, but inevitably. I am old, and I have never known it to fail, even if the sowing was good seed. If we sow corruption, we get more of it in the harvest. Maybe there are no such things as morals and virtues; merely ideals we have conceived with which to protect ourselves, our homes, and property. Maybe we can be freer, happier, without morals, virtues, home life, and property. That remains to be seen. We are certainly leading in that direction.

Meanwhile, I was in the West and the consequences not only of divorce, but of light serial marriages are beginning to show up there. Divorced people may not be in the majority, but they certainly are the ruling minority. They control public opinion in this matter and furnish the reeling standards of social life. They believe ardently in marriage as an experiment, and in divorce as a relief, but nobody, so far as I could see, was in the least concerned about the consequences.

One day I met a rapturously pretty girl at a luncheon

party in Hollywood. Although I took her to be in her teens, she was a star who had won fame and fortune on the screen. She wore a sweet little frock and had a maiden-blue stare in her lovely eyes. That unconsciously veiled look of virginal innocency was something I did not know could be counterfeited. I accepted her as a happy young girl and enjoyed the frolicsome gayety with which she handled me. Words cannot describe my sensations when she remarked, as if she was telling me a bright piece of news about herself, that she had just divorced her third husband, and now she hoped she was 'off of husbands for life' — she merely 'hoped' you understand!

'You simply cannot afford to be worried with husbands in my profession,' she explained, speaking of these beings collectively without the least affectation of boldness, but sensibly, as one might refer to an unprofitable investment.

'But you are supposed to forsake all others, everything, and cleave only to your husband,' I returned, after a stultified pause, and decently avoiding the plural of the noun husband.

'Not worth it, my dear,' she laughed, actually calling me her 'dear,' not meaning to speak patronizingly, but philosophically, all the time looking like an infant sage.

'I have more talent than any of my husbands had. Can you see me giving up my career for one of them?' she asked with nothing but reasonableness.

It was on the tip of my tongue to say that I had known many a gifted and nobler woman to do it. But I felt that such a rejoinder would sound foolish in her ears. Besides, it occurred to me in a flash that her point

of view was illuminating, if not decent from my point of view. So many modern women are digging up their talents which better women left safely buried. They have grown so clever and efficient that they are bound to discover how inefficient and expensive men are whom we accepted as husbands and lords of creation without suspecting what gifts we had beyond those of faithfulness and sacrifice.

But I could not afford to let her sit there and stare me out of countenance because I believed in the holy bonds of matrimony.

'What do you do with them?' I asked, flanking her with this question about consequences.

'Beg pardon?'

' — With your ex-husbands,' I explained.

'Oh, nothing. We are done with them, you see.' As much as to say, the rule in this business was to leave the dead to bury the dead.

'But what a funny question,' she added, with a wider, bluer, stare of sweet innocence.

'Well,' I said, 'they seem to overtake misfortune faster and oftener than the average wretched man. The morning papers carry what may be called an agony column devoted to the casualties among ex-husbands, and the per cent appears to be extraordinarily high. Two or three "former husbands" of celebrated stars are taken nearly every night in police raids. If an automobile turns turtle on the highway at night, one of the intoxicated joy-riders is almost sure to be the former husband of a prominent woman. And at least one of them is featured as having eloped with some one he should not have eloped with. Men are notoriously incapable of taking honorable, ambitious care of them-

selves. That alone accounts for the creation of women. Eve had to be. Adam was no good without her. This is also the reason why men marry. They do not really want to marry, nine times out of ten, but they feel the need of a woman to spoof them and take care of them. In order to make sure of her they marry her.'

She was listening with so much seriousness that I made haste to clinch my point.

'If you girls are determined to go on divorcing them, I think you should get together and found a home for fallen husbands where they can have some of the comforts, security, and habits of domestic life,' I went on, and would have said more if she had not interrupted me by smacking her hands and letting out a trill of laughter. It does not please me to be applauded by a woman who has had three husbands!

But it was no more possible to appeal to her conscience than it is to impose a sense of guilt on the Germans for having caused the World War. She had every kind of sense except the sense of responsibility. She might even be buried with excessive pomp and circumstance. This very thing happened in the case of a famous actress there last year. She flashed with meteoric splendor across many screens in Hollywood. She had numerous husbands, divorced from all of them. Finally she faded out, the victim of her excesses, and went her downward way. She died alone, in direst poverty, deserted by all her brilliant companions. Then they hurried to provide a solid silver casket for the wretched rag of her body, covered it with flowers, and made a great occasion of her funeral.

If a tiny chick died when my sister and I were very small children, we were not grieved, we were thrilled at

the opportunity provided for a funeral. The obsequies were always as elaborate as we could make them. The 'remains' of the chicken were squeezed into a match-box which was wrapped in a brilliant scrap of paper or silk. We laid infinitesimal wreaths upon it of pink and blue larkspur and bore it dolorously to the grave already dug in the very considerable cemetery we kept under the old horse apple tree for these deliciously sad occasions. When we finished the burial ceremonies, we squatted close by, threw dust over our heads, and shrieked with the piercing joy of mimicked grief. There was no logical connection between these playful burial ceremonies of my earliest youth and a Hollywood funeral for a fallen star, yet the one recalled the other as being strangely similar.

It is not the significance of death that impresses these people, but the occasion it affords for the publicity of their emotions. They go to the greatest expense to publish the last tear of their sentimental excitement. They have lost the decent sense of privacy which makes some emotions sacred by the professional practice of their emotions on the screen on a salary basis. So, whether one of them passes at the zenith of her fame, or at the dark end of her rainbow career, they unconsciously cash in on the corpse to advertise their business.

I missed the shadow of the Will of God in all their performances, without which there can be no dignity in life or death.

I went on ambling about Hollywood, trying to figure it out. It is a huge town of two hundred thousand people, located like a fashionable suburb, without a railroad station, and with no consistency of elegance

STONE WALL BY PATH LEADING TO THE STUDY, IN THE VALLEY

and repose to account for this gesture of leaving the common people without the public means of conveyance. The founders were imitating the idea of such a suburb and gave it up. It remains a record of the enterprise of flighty people with unstable minds, always in pursuit of another idea. They changed their minds and made it the factory town of the motion-picture industry, moved out, and established the center of their social life in Beverly Hills and Los Angeles. What we read about Hollywood is press-agent stuff, grossly exaggerated. After all we have heard about lax morals, loose marriage relations and dissipations, I was astonished to find these conditions as familiar as the memories I have of the negro quarter on the old plantation at home. Precisely the same conditions existed there without millions to capitalize them. Negroes slipped in and out of marriage with the same childish impulses. They behaved exactly the same way about funerals; showed more talent, in fact, because they could stage a truly sensational funeral with the body of the humblest of their race about to be buried in a plain pine box. If it happened to be that of a man, the wife and sweetheart frequently staged an altercation at the very grave to prove which one had the right to tear around as the chief mourner — even as recently happened when one of the heroes of the screen passed out, leaving a tangle of marriage and romantic relations behind him to enliven the scenes of his obsequies. Though I never knew a similar disturbance between two men at the funeral of a woman. It seems to be against the instincts of the most primitive nature in men to quarrel over any kind of dead woman. And I do not suppose such a thing ever happened in Hollywood.

I remember that we paid no attention to the orgies and flighty marriages of these darkies, knowing that they were of undisciplined primitive stock, and that ages must pass before they acquire a taste for the delicacy and decency of morals.

I received something like the same impression of the social and domestic life of the leading characters in Hollywood. Odds and ends of men and women gathered there from all the ends of the earth, chosen, not for any worthy qualities of character, but mainly for their physical graces and photographic noses. My notion is that, while there is much beauty and genius in Hollywood, there is not much quality, and astoundingly little intelligence beyond the pantomime talent for mimicking emotions. It was made clear to me that very ordinary men and women, without brains or traditions to fit them for the heroic parts they frequently play, can be made to develop a genius for merely looking noble, meek, good, ignoble, ferocious, and bad, so convincingly as to rival the greatest sculpture and the greatest paintings of the ages.

Nevertheless, this is where the screen is and will remain far behind the legitimate stage. The directors furnish the brains for the star. On those occasions where I saw the filming of pictures the star was beautiful and, to all appearances, brainless, while the director was a bitter fiend of patience. Imagine a smart young man like Monte Bell teaching Julia Marlowe how to look and speak her lines in the character of Lady Macbeth. Yet I saw him putting a famous young star through her paces in a picture that has since proved a success. It was like teaching a fool to think. For two hours he went over one scene with her that on the

screen of the finished picture passed in the fraction of a second. It was frightful. I lost my patience as a spectator and was obliged to leave the place on account of feeling a fit of vehemence coming on. I cannot think they are all that stupid — Mary Pickford, for example. I was there when her last picture, 'Sparrows,' was being filmed. She did her own thinking. Like all the world, I lost my heart to Mary Pickford. She is a nice woman if I know one when I see her. And she keeps a nice little house on the grounds of the Pickford-Fairbanks Studio. It is like a village cottage, with bright, old-fashioned flowers blooming beside the doorway. The parlor is pretty. She knows how to serve a good meal and to preside like a good little hostess at her table. She talks sensibly and never gives herself airs. I doubt if she has any airs. She has a dog named 'Rooney,' but not 'Annie.' I did not tell her so, knowing how sensitive the best people are about their dogs, but I believe he is a mongrel. There was an intimation of frightful reality about him that is not characteristic of thoroughbreds, whether man or beast.

As near as I can define a very embarrassing sensation, the feeling I had in Hollywood was that of a grown-up, serious-minded person in a community of very active grown-up children who were not serious-minded, and with no one but the motion-picture directors to control them. Still I might have prolonged my visit there on account of an unconquerable and unsatisfied curiosity but for a very slight circumstance frequently denoted in the West by the title of 'a slight tremor.'

It was the luncheon hour, probably two hundred people in the dining-room of the Hollywood Hotel.

Suddenly every knife, fork, and spoon on the tables tittered. Ice in the glasses tinkled. Dishes clattered against dishes. Followed a dead silence. No one moved, no one lifted his head; and those who had their heads up and mouths open in the act of receiving food, held the pose rigidly. But some people cannot pass over a scandal in silence. A woman popped up behind me; as she passed my table she leaned over and hissed: 'Did you feel that shock?' 'No,' I hissed back, 'and you had better not feel it.'

But I doubt if she heard me. She was making valorous strides for the door, and probably the open spaces beyond, because that is one thing you can say for the skies, they never fall when the earth shakes!

None of us lingered gluttonously over our food that day. Conversation rose and fell spasmodically as if here and there some brave coward in the room tried to pierce his fears with the spoken word. But no one got as far as the feeblest laugh. Whatever you may say of the *insouciances* of these Westerners when they discuss Earth's tremors after she has settled down, they have an attitude of mental reverence toward seismic disturbances that resents the levity of the politest wit while the performance is going on.

As soon as enough people had left the dining-room to make my own departure inconspicuous, I hurried upstairs and packed my things. Within the hour I was on my way to the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, eight miles distant. If I had it to do over, I should never stop under a thousand miles when the spirit moved me to outdistance the faintest tremor of the earth. But at that time I had an idea that these were purely local phenomena, like bubbles in a pan of water. Now I

know that Nature has a much wider sense of locality than we have, and that while she is merely sizzling in one place she can throw up a bubble of gas in another place five hundred miles away that splits a mountain a mile wide.

VII

It was mid-afternoon of the day I so hastily evacuated Hollywood on account of that earth tremor. I was zooming along the Grand Boulevard on my way to Los Angeles, when suddenly it occurred to me that I had forgotten something.

The things you forget leave a faint trace of their quality or meaning behind them. This felt like the mental dent left by an idea. I recognized the sensation because I am subject to it, the loss of my best thoughts in transition. They seem to fly in through the open casements of my mind by accident. Then something real happens. I must leave it until I have attended to an urgent bit of business, or the earth shakes. When I calm down, go back to pick up the happy thought or the witty inspiration, the thing has vanished. How many times in my writing career have I gone bankrupt in these small ways!

I searched all the pockets of my recollections trying to find this mental token of Hollywood. I was annoyed, as I have been a few times when I had gone to hear a sensational preacher and could not recall the text of his sermon afterward. What had I expected to bring away from Hollywood that I did not get? Ah! It came back to me in a flash, the bright rim of perdition! I had gone there to study it, as amateurs endeavor to acquire a little culture by regarding a foreign masterpiece with a fixed stare.

Well, what about the bright rim of perdition? My

friends, it is not there! The Old Boy himself could not make anything brilliant and substantial out of the confetti of folly flying in that place. A great many of these celebrities may be stars on the screen, but in real life I should say they are contraband stars. Humorously speaking, they are in reduced circumstances, covering this poverty of taste and spirit with childish pomp, substituting silly escapades for real adventures, performing the most daring feats of courage for the screen without being either honorable or courageous in the great moral drama of living.

Yet these people reach greater audiences than all the preachers and teachers of righteousness. They are affecting the national standards of thrift, decency, and responsibility more than all our universities do. Therefore, while I would not go so far as to suggest that they should take ordination vows, I do think they should be made to take civil service examinations in the cardinal virtues of decent society and be required to live up to them so long as they show their faces on the screen. A matinée idol should be a good man, is what I mean. I find no fault with a bathing beauty for becoming a famous dancer, but I do think she should behave herself properly in private life, because these people have no private life. It is all published or rumored.

Nearly every man or woman who achieves fame in any of the arts is in a precarious situation, so far as his reputation is concerned. This is due to the sensational activities of people with bad minds and cannot be avoided.

This is the blackmail we all pay. I know one desperate author who keeps a lawyer to defend him in extreme emergencies. He is a good man with a wife and

grown children, but the day I met him he was a trifle pop-eyed because the day before some scamp had borrowed his name like a wedding garment, had taken the rich widow he was about to marry around to see the author's palatial town house, indicating that this was to be her future home, and was practically on the way to the altar with her when his smart lawyer blocked the aisle.

I myself have had mysterious reputations conferred upon me like doubtful degrees, as, for example, when a flashing lady appeared in Cuba and cut quite a caper there upon the bright rim of perdition masquerading as Corra Harris. But I never worry about these affairs, because I have taken considerable pains with my real character. It is not what you would call a lovely character, patched in places where my charity and Christian patience gave away suddenly as when from natural heinousness I accomplished some devastating deed quick as a flash. But, all told, it is a decent, durable character, if I do say so myself, and on this account I figure I can afford the transient depletion of my mere reputation. No one needs to worry about that if he worries along with this Ten Commandments and sweetens himself now and then with a Beatitude. We cannot be perfect. I do not even try, being so sure of my continued immortality in another world, and probably in easier circumstances as to righteousness than this world affords. Time enough then to put on my high lights. So long as we are in this one and in grave danger of being 'despitefully used' by our fellow man, it is not my idea to lie down on the job of my mortal life and let him use me up. I would rather do something braver for Christ's sake. I firmly believe in the

Scripture which says, 'Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth,' because I have seen them do it. But in my own case, knowing my natural limitations in that meekness which is teachableness, I could not expect to inherit much of the earth within a thousand years. Therefore, it seems wiser to go on learning the things safest to know along the way I have to go and to put off that ultimate meekness until I matriculate in a better school.

The point I am making is that so many of these stars and star asters of the screen are neither moral nor immoral. They are unmoral. They have an awful levity of the spirit which imparts no grace to virtue and no charm to vice. If I did not know better, I should be tempted to believe many of them have been imported from the Land of Nod — which is where we must infer those first animal men and women settled when the Lord created us the sixth day along with the other animals. They bore no spiritual likeness to Adam and his family, created after that long Sabbath Day's rest, during which the Lord observed the deficiencies of those mere creature people whom He created on the sixth day.

In any case, we know Cain went over into the Land of Nod to choose his wife. I believe more sorrow has come to us from this foreign marriage than from that forbidden fruit incident for which Eve's regrettable enterprise was responsible. For all my life, it seems to me, I have recognized the footsteps of this gay girl from the Land of Nod trapesing back and forth across the sadly shining ones of better women, not easily followed across the mountain-tops because she blurs and makes them indistinct. Her sons and daughters are every-

where, but it seemed to me I saw, too, sheiks and Shebas of this line frolicking around Hollywood.

I am not saying this to hurt the Nod girl's feelings. My notion is that she'd only toss her head and giggle; that while she is pretty, talented, grasping, impulsively generous, easily moved to tears or laughter, you could not really hurt her feelings without cutting her throat, or by depriving her of alimony, or of the opportunity to publish herself. She is only serious about gratifying her vanities, desires, and passions — characteristics of the ladies of Nod, my dears, wherever you see them, whether in Hollywood or in your own community.

I may be wrong about all this. I must be partially wrong, because I met very few of the motion-picture celebrities, and then quite by accident. This was not because I held aloof, but because I was like a funny old cork of a woman bobbing on the surface of that place, not recognized, and no less negligible if I had been recognized. With a very few exceptions, those whom I did meet made no impression upon my recollection. It was like being introduced to paper dolls. I cannot remember their faces, nor the legends of their fame. I seem to be meanly lacking in the right training in admiration to appreciate them. And I was disappointed in Hollywood. In spite of the alluring prospectus so many newspapers carried of that place, I literally could not find it. It leaves no glow upon the horizon of my memory.

I have sometimes thought those of us who arrive in the great city of Hades, with no more preparation than the published accounts of that place to prepare our minds for it, will be astonished and disappointed. Instead of finding there the scenes of anguish our imag-

inations have painted, we may come into a proud, quiet city of many strong mansions, where evil men rule with the ruthless power of evil. No disturbances, no mobs, no robberies or murders. No courts of justice in that dreadful community of criminals, and no mercilessly respectable people with damned minds to enforce the tyranny of public opinion. The laity of ordinary bad people would be so oppressed that they would not dare ascend by faith out of their strange torment, because aspiration could not survive in such an atmosphere.

What I feel is that the whole thing would be static, held together by the centripetal forces of unutterable evil. If you did not stir up anything, nothing would happen to you. And if nothing happened for an eternity or two, how would you feel?

Still, to a stranger just arriving, it might look as would any other great city with the lid on and no filling-stations.

If I must be punished in my life to come, let me have it literally, according to the hottest holocaust doctrines of the Old Testament. I should prefer it to being placidly damned in a place like this with no real burning distress to take my mind off the situation.

I am not comparing Hollywood to such a place, you understand. For even a person of no artistic sensibilities at all can usually distinguish the difference between a chromo and a masterpiece. But at last we see only what we have the capacity to see, comprehend no more than we have the intelligence to divine. I may have missed the meaning of Hollywood. It is possible that it is a bright and lovely place, filled with butterfly spirits in a state of frivolous transition, but to my somber old Scylla and Charybdis mind, the whole thing

appeared a trifle more than usual out of drawing with the eternal order. And nobody yet has disputed the fact that there is an Eternal Order, however it came about.

Los Angeles is a huge cocktail of humanity. There is a bead on it — a bead on all Western life for that matter; but in this great town it spits and sparkles. I am not sure that a cocktail should foam, now that I think of it; however, some intoxicating combinations do. Los Angeles is one of them. The people of it are happily inebriated with the vivacity of living. Leaving out the birth certificates, the population increases at the rate of ten thousand a month, and that without visible means of adequate support. Let the envious account for this phenomenon according to the meanness of their minds; all I can say is that I saw no indications of young ravens being miraculously fed according to the assurances we have in the Scriptures, although they are the most spiritually minded people I ever saw without taking the trouble to be religious about it. My own impression was that their amazing prosperity is largely psychical, founded upon imagination, and a happy-go-lucky faith in the future. It is only partially covered by their oil industry, their fruit markets, the tourists who come to spend, the millionaires who settle there to live in vast comfort, and by the profligate extravagance of the adjacent motion-picture world. Real estate speculation reaches the point of pure romance there without the classical dignity of this form of literature. But it is not the only section of this country where the same kind of fiction is being produced in values, and in every case it only accounts for much of the poverty in those places. In

Los Angeles even poverty wears a cheerful aspect, as if it were walking with a long stride to where prosperity will begin again. They are the bravest people I ever saw about thrusting their fears and misfortunes behind them. They believe in something as children believe, with the same ardor. As near as I could make out, Providence has little to do with their real life, but it is their faith in opportunity, in their earth, seas, and skies. They are still in the gold rush period toward that great mine of riches, the future.

It was not until I reached Los Angeles that I seemed suddenly to be absorbed into the whole life of the West, rather than in one of its elements, like that of Santa Barbara or Hollywood. I could write a book about it, but refrain for conscience' sake lest some reader of the thing might sell all that he has and go out there to invest it. If he does, California will get it. Not even God can protect him from their joyful wit at this business. They are about riches as children are about toys. They are determined to have them, not to keep, but to spend. Their acquisitiveness is equaled only by their generosity. I know a man in Los Angeles who lost three hundred thousand dollars in less time than it would require the maddest speculator in this section to lose a hundred dollars. Not only that, they put him in the hole for another hundred thousand. Now his creditors have adopted him. They pay all his expenses and have been doing it for two years, because they love him and believe in him and need his advice occasionally about other similar business deals! Can you imagine such a situation? He no longer 'rolls in wealth,' which is one of their childish pastimes, but he is comfortable, happy, and very rich in friends.

I am copying here an incident which accounts for my intimate knowledge of this man's affairs.

If you are curious to know what becomes of the people you have forgotten, go West. You will find many of them there. The scholarly gentleman you knew years ago may have become a dope fiend and a bootlegger, disguised still by that gentle scholarly countenance, not actually corrupt even yet, but the victim of one accident of fortune after another until he is reduced to the treachery of every relationship in order to survive in that vast maelstrom of merciless vivacity and enterprise which is the formula of the Western business world. Or, he may have been a reckless young gambler at home who was obliged to disappear on account of some rakish escapade. You may find him in the West grown to be a prominent citizen, honored and trusted.

Thirty-nine years ago I was the youngest of brides, going one Saturday afternoon in February with my Circuit Rider to his first appointment after our marriage. We rode in a borrowed buggy, drawn by a borrowed horse. I remember that horse to the last rib showing in her sides. She was a sorrel mare with a bad disposition. Once in so often she flung her ears back, lifted her heels with a mean little squeal, and kicked the dashboard, not destructively, but maliciously, simply to indicate her contempt for us, the Gospel, and everything else. I remember how Lundy admired me because I showed no signs of feminine terror under this trying circumstance. Having been accustomed all my life at Farmhill to pawing, kicking, biting, balking horses and mules, I was, you may say, case-hardened to the heel temper of an irritable old mare. One of my

earliest recollections as a small, very fat little girl was of being seated in the foot of our old buggy at home, when Polly, the vicious old mother of many outlaw mules, kicked the dashboard off without touching a hair of my tousled head. Mother screamed and Father snatched me up, but I was no more dismayed than is a modern child who escapes the wheels of a motor car by the fraction of an inch.

Lundy and I were to spend that Saturday night with Brother Bill Fleming and his family. The next day Lundy was to preach at old Redwine Church so frequently mentioned in the Circuit Rider stories.

When we drove up in front of the sweet old farmhouse, the Flemings welcomed us with a great to-do of cordiality. And little Mose Fleming stood shyly by, waiting to take the horse to the barn. He must have been about twelve years old, tow-headed, very fair, pop-eyed, very large blue eyes set wide apart. He had a touched-up, thick, red-lipped mouth, caught twisted at one corner with the sly end of a grin, the wit of the same grin twinkling in those prominent eyes, so quickly cast down beneath my glance, not embarrassed, but too much fun in them to reveal to a preacher's wife, however young she was. This is the last recollection of 'Mose' during that period. I do not even remember whether he was converted under Lundy's ministry, but I doubt it. What I recall is that the Flemings were plain people, and poor, but very generous, hospitable, and prominent in the Redwine Church.

Then all these years passed, thirty-nine of them, when the telephone rang one evening in my room at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles — a man's voice coming through: 'Mrs. Harris?' — 'Yes.' — 'Dr.

Lundy's wife?' — 'Yes.' A pause then. 'Remember Redwine Church?' — 'Yes. Who is this speaking?' 'Remember the little boy that took your horse the first time you came to spend the night with Bill Fleming's folks?'

For a moment I could not answer. Memory rose like a wind and blew through all the leaves of those years. Visions flew past with incredible swiftness — Lundy and I driving along the winding country road. No fear in my heart. Such bliss! Uphill and down to the clattering tune of the horse's feet, going very fast. Dead stalks of goldenrod waving their bleached plumes stiffly in the cold wind above the dead grass. The sun shining across fields of tender green wheat in all this somber winter grayness. Another turn in the road, and a little white church stood upon the edge of the wood, looking at us. Lundy's church! How I felt, proud and holy! Then the Fleming farmhouse, and two hounds rushing out to bay at us. The door flung open, with the whole family flying through it, the women's skirts fluttering in the wind, Brother Fleming's bellow of welcome. So many glad sounds — that little boy with the rumpled blond hair bringing up the rear, going directly to the horse's bridle reins, too timid to come nearer. And then the years and years of visions that brightened and faded after this happy day. Don't tell me that we are not immortal! To be able to recall in the briefest moment of time what it took forty years of living to accomplish, still to believe, and still to hope in spite of all that, is proof of immortality. Mere creatures can't do it! Their memories always change to mere instincts . . .

'Mose!' I exclaimed, endeavoring to speak calmly. —

'It's me!' he returned, making no effort to conceal his emotion. — 'Come over here, son. I want to see you!' I cried, with the vision of the little boy simply grown up fixed in my mind. — 'Son! My eye!' he snorted. 'I'm coming, and you'll see what sort of old Abraham you are calling son! Be there in ten minutes.'

That many minutes later I was standing in the gallery of the hotel waiting for him. Other people there, walking about, looking, waiting, expecting friends. I joined the procession — glancing this way and that for Moses Fleming. At last there were only two of us wandering up and down that long place, a very tall old man with a bald head, fringed with white hair, clean-shaven, wearing a dress suit, looking like a slim black beetle walking on his hind legs. I cannot tell how many more times we might have passed each other if I had not caught sight of that noonday blue beam in his prominent eyes. Not a grin, but wit.

'Mose!' I barely murmured in case I should be mistaken in this incredible vision of the dingy little country lad I used to know.

'I thought this was you all the time!' he exclaimed, clasping my hand.

'Your hair doesn't change,' he added, giving me the once-over. From which I inferred that this mere fringe of myself was all that was not changed in my appearance.

This was the man who had lost three hundred thousand and gone another hundred thousand in the hole, whose creditors loved and trusted him so much that they were providing handsomely for him 'until he could get back on his feet,' as he explained with never a doubt in his mind about performing that acrobatic feat in California finance.

I was now able to walk short distances. The crowds on the streets enchanted me, so different from the fierce indifference of people I have seen thrusting past each other in New York and other great cities. These men and women seemed to be rushing along together, toward some common purpose, even if they were going in opposite directions. What I mean is that they were humanly mindful of each other, ready to smile, give you a smile whether or not!

The trouble was that I could not walk far nor stand at all. I solved this problem by dickering with the old man who had a news-stand at the next corner beyond the hotel. He agreed to allow me to sit on his box and sell papers without commission, while he engaged the crowd hand to hand. I doubt if such a business arrangement could have been made anywhere this side of the West. For I had no character recommendation. We did a thriving business that afternoon. Such an exhilarating throng, all in a good humor! It was better for me than lying in bed with a trained nurse in attendance.

When I had my fill of it, I stepped off a trifle groggily and decidedly short-winded, having outlasted my strength at that business. But I slept like a laboring man that night. Not that any one could sleep all night without waking in Los Angeles. It is the noisiest place on earth, Paris not excepted. There is a brief time during the night in Paris when the roar of traffic dies down, but never in Los Angeles. The people there are busy day and night. One night, coming in late from a 'preview' of a motion picture in Pasadena, we met a *house* traveling at a moderate rate of speed along one of the wider boulevards, as if it positively must get to the

site where it was to stop before traffic started the next morning, which I suppose was actually the situation. They use balloons to advertise real estate after dark. They talk furiously all night long in the business sections. I have heard the most astoundingly intimate confidences lying on my bed in a fifth-floor room of the hotel, between two men in the street below who were discussing the next day's deal in real estate. If a crime is committed anywhere in the city, sirens scream in all parts of it as the police start in pursuit of the criminal.

Some of the happiest days I spent were in the old Chinese shops and antique shops — looking for that chain of golden blossoms! — buying real Pekoe tea and foolish foreign things which looked so out of place in this old cabin that I have been obliged to hide them in the storeroom — and always listening to these people talk who are so glad of themselves! I have heard them criticized for this, but I cannot imagine the reason why. It does not spring from vulgar boastfulness, but from a sort of childish joy they have in their great possession, The West. The Lord who made it cannot admire it so much as they do. It is beautiful, to be enchanted with your own land, to love it, and never to despise or tire of it, even if it shakes the very teeth out of your mouth! They are all delightfully and incurably adolescent. Never have I seen such frivolous spiritual enthusiasms, with or without the sense of God to sustain them. A rich woman can found a sort of Church, endow it with doctrines and Scriptures of her own making and fill it with enthusiastic worshipers, not of herself, but of some light idea she has of blessedness.

I spent a month in one small town of less than twenty thousand people. They had nineteen churches and forty-three creeds — all in active practice! If a religious war broke out in California, it would resemble that between the ancient feudal lords of the Old World — not enough men under any single banner to make a respectable battle line, unless, perhaps, the Catholics. I had a feeling that the various groups 'In Science' and 'New Thought' were in the majority, but it was an awful feeling. This only means, of course, that I have reached the age when it seems wiser to choose my best thought and knowledge from that great body of former experiences which have been tried out by saints and martyrs and the elder, more conservative philosophers. I can think of no group in history whom those 'In Science' resemble so closely as they do the Jesuits who developed a strangely unscrupulous conscience under their apparent meekness for doing terrible things that their own good might come to pass. And I do not recall any ripe old philosopher of the past who would advocate the jazz doctrines of some of these modern thinkers.

It was the adolescence of these people on the West Coast which made the deepest and happiest impression upon me, because it is a quality of mind and spirit which they never lose even in extreme old age — but it is not to be confounded with the spirit of pioneers. Pioneers are sober-minded men and women who struggle against the wilderness, adverse conditions, and dire poverty, to sustain life. Your Californian has no such sustained soberness of mind. He is the only inebriate I ever saw Nature make with just air and sunshine. He fears nothing, least of all poverty. They are all

capitalists at heart, whether they are or not in fact. And California is their pool, the great shining pot of wealth they share in common, and 'the sky is the limit'! They are a trifle beside themselves about their natural scenery, and have built the longest, widest systems of macadamized roads in this country so that they may travel as far as possible every day to look at this scenery and rejoice. It is a queer thing to say about them, but they do not believe in earthquakes, at least not for more than a moment or a few days when some city has been shaken down. The next day they are busy denying what happened and rebuilding that town or city. That morning in June of last year when Santa Barbara was shaken down, Los Angeles rocked like a cradle upon its foundations, yet promptly at seven o'clock I saw workmen a moment after the tremors ceased, perched on the very top of the steel frame of a lofty tower adding another cubit to its height. The Angelus bells were shaken out of tune. But they had been adjusted in time for the noonday chimes. Every day for a week slight tremors made discords of these chimes, and every day they were hastily tuned again. Not by the false note of one bell would they confess that the earth beneath them was still a trifle unsteady!

They simply will not endure a reference to their earthquakes, any more than a devoted son will permit a slighting reference to his noble mother without letting you have it on the jaw. I committed an unforgivable breach of good manners only once during my pilgrimage through California, by referring mildly to the fact that the earth at least switched its tail in Los Angeles during the Santa Barbara quake. The man to

whom I addressed this discourteous remark purpled up with indignation. He reminded me of every cyclone and tornado that had earned a name for itself in any part of this country for the last fifty years. He had them all on the tip end of his tongue, including a complete statement of the damage they had done to life and property, to the last yearling found ten years ago lodged in the top of a tree after a flood in the Mississippi Valley!

I can imagine the vast bookkeeping operations that are going forward now as to the late hurricane which swept part of the East Coast of Florida. They are grieved for the suffering deaths and losses of property sustained there. Still that hurricane went far toward balancing the earthquake and storm losses between Florida and California, because until now they did not have much beyond torrid heat and mosquitoes to cast into the teeth of that outrageously competitive rival State.

So far as I can make out, California has barely one advantage over Florida, where the real estate lies level and is easier to reach than on the slopes of the High Sierras, where the fruit is incomparably better-flavored, where the adjacent Atlantic Ocean is sufficiently wide for aquatic sports and has the commercial advantage of being narrower than the Pacific Ocean, therefore nearer foreign countries and foreign markets. The wealth that has already poured into the State insures its future and will be obliged to restore the losses incurred by the disastrous hurricane. But I am reliably informed that men and women do grow old in Florida. And they do not in California. Their legs and eyesight may fail them there, but they remain to the

last amazingly young in mind and the mighty hopes that make us men.

With no help from the psychologists or other learned students, I venture to account for this phenomenon: California is a mountainous country, but it does not produce the mountaineer type any more than the flat surface of Florida can, because those mountains are too lofty and too barren to sustain human life. They remain beautiful and inspiring, but unattainable. These Californians cannot grow up to them. They remain forever the young sons and daughters of immortal heights, ever inspiring, but never arriving. This is the history of all youth, except in other places they measure their stature and their achievements by those of their forefathers, not by such heavenly altitudes as these. Take my word for it, this circumstance has its profound effect upon the people of California. If you do not believe it, go out there and observe what an obsession their mountains are with them. They are perpetually gnawing like valiant ants at the lower slopes, terracing them with highways, building skyline cities up there. Still there is a point beyond which they cannot go, not and pump water up for a bath or even a drink.

Besides, there is the desert on the other side, a great continent, which needs only enough water to make it the richest country in the world. This desert literally is the subconscious mind of California, a deep silence, of the future which they do not admit to themselves. Still it is there, the determination to possess and water this desert and make it blossom like a garden. Such aspirations and plans keep people young, especially if they are without a drop of water to spare, as in the case

of these Californians. But give them time, enough millionaires and tourists, and they will cut a canal across California and filter the Pacific Ocean through it into that desert if they capsize this earth in the effort! Because they are young, immortally young, and will remain so as long as their mountains stand and the desert beyond remains dry.

A widow who does not contemplate any more foreign entanglements, matrimonially speaking, but must make her own way in the world and earn her own living, is like a business woman without a boss. She is obliged to go ahead, assume all the responsibilities of her situation, do the next thing, whatever it is, without halting in that state of indecision which is so characteristic of us if there is a man in legitimate reach of our cowardice and indecision.

I have had to behave almost like a man in these matters since Lundy's death sixteen years ago. I could never sit down and weep, or take a headache and remain in bed that day if there was something important to do or to plan. I could never give up the fight for a moment, knowing there was no one to stand in the breach until I could get myself together again. I have been living on the loftier mountainous side of my nature in inclement weather until I have lost many of my feminine habits and points of view. Some of them I never had. For example, I had no opportunity to learn the art of coquetry, having joyfully married the only man who ever paid me the least attention when I was seventeen. Then twenty years of married life in the Methodist itinerancy. Next, sixteen years of this frightfully arduous business of being a widow, indeed.

At last, starting off on this Happy Pilgrimage, neck and neck with adverse fate.

It was a good thing I headed toward California. If you are dead, go to California; you may live again. I began to live again. I did nothing but amuse myself. If any one had suggested going to a horse-race, I should have gone. I barely missed attending a prize-fight as it was. I had made a vow to do everything I wanted to do and was on the point of accepting this invitation when it suddenly occurred to me that I did not really want to see two men slug each other for a purse of money. For a principle, yes, or to avenge a wrong — in that case I could have stood by and watched them shed each other's blood. Something manly about that. But everything connected with a mere prize-fight is brutal and abhorrent to one's sense of honor and delicacy as I conceive the meaning of these terms.

It was the woman of me that began to revive in this bright and happy state of idleness. Can you believe it, moving sedately along in my middle fifties I met more than one man who tempted me to shift the noble scene of my countenance for the briefest moment, long enough to try him out with the smile of the woman I really am in spite of everything. I cannot account for this scandalous inclination after all the modesty, chastity, and honesty I have been through. And I cannot pretend that I was restrained from this vandalism (which I saw going on all around me, with ladies ten years my senior starring in the rôle of heroine!) by anything I have ever read in the Bible. But the hard-fisted self-respect I have is stronger than any desire I might have to gratify my curiosity about what the smiled-at man would do.

I knew. He would become one of those real estate Knights of the Golden West who cash in similar romances by inducing the dizzy old heroine to buy a lot in the tule-marsh sector of a new subdivision. If that was not his business, still he would persuade her to purchase something. Even if he was on the square, what should I do with him? I should never have become a widow if I could have avoided this misfortune, but being one, I have learned to appreciate the advantages of my position along with its hardships. I would sooner take out naturalization papers in Greece than more marriage vows. As near as I can make out, it was the original woman of me who wanted to cut that caper of a smile. I will not admit that this was due to any moral deflection of my mind, but in part it may have been inspired by the fact that I have found out that so many men entertain a sort of grudge against me. They suspect me of having some kind of outrageous intelligence for fathoming them and understanding more than they preach or teach of themselves. They are wrong, of course. Whenever I discuss men I am talking through my hat; if I happen to hit the nail on the head, it is by accident. I am not responsible for their guilty consciences. I am simply resentful because they frequently pick on me when I am totally innocent of them.

At last my attention was involuntarily riveted upon an old war-horse of a Colonel whom some one brought up and introduced to me at the Biltmore Hotel. He was a handsome, mettlesome man, all done up in the stripes and insignia of his rank, not vocative about the services he had rendered his country, nor the battles he had won, though victory was published in headlines

above his beetling brows — this is to indicate that he was still sufficiently firm mentally to keep up the magnificent strutting silence of a distinguished soldier's modesty.

But that which touched me to the heart was the gallant appreciation he showed of my books. Oh, yes, he had read them and so on and so forth — all gratifying to me. I do not know how the man was cunning enough to say such a thing as this, but as near as I can remember this is exactly what he said one evening, reared back, buttoned so tightly across the breast that if I am not mistaken I heard him wheezing:

'It is a marvel to me, how a woman, so obviously ignorant of the world, and with but a limited knowledge of human nature, confined almost entirely to its nobler manifestations, ever managed to write such worthy human documents as your books are!'

'Worthy' is the term he used, from which you may infer his age and the maturity of his mind. A young man rarely ever inoculates his vocabulary with this fine old word until he is honorably settled in his fifties. I took the Colonel to be well on in his sixties, and it even seemed probable to me by putting two and two together that the Government might be on the point of retiring him.

But that point he made about my ignorance of human nature was new and soothing to me, because many men have brought the false accusation against me of knowing too much about human nature, as if this was a fault not easily to be forgiven in a woman.

I was confirmed by the Colonel's manner in a theory I have long entertained tentatively, that if I really possessed this luminous quality of ignorance it would have gone toward endearing me to men.

I spent a week of pleasant evenings listening to that brave old soldier build my character as he saw it. Never once did he commit the banality of flattery suitable to the young and silly. But at times he grew so eloquent and so truthful to my highest that I felt like a small beautiful cathedral with all my altar candles lighted. The way he disposed of my fame indicates the peculiar masculine quality of his genius. I am persuaded that it was not altogether military at that. My fame, he implied, was a mere bagatelle compared with the woman I was, lovely, entrancing, to be sure, but he regarded it much as he would a white rose tucked in my hair — never can I forget that dear man! The grace he had in wit to change the scrawny little laurel wreath of a literary reputation I have to a rose-sweetened woman! If he had been an artist instead of a Colonel, I should have begged him to paint my portrait. Think of the loveliness and glory of a face that would remind the beholders of a cathedral, a rose, and a woman. I doubt if such a masterpiece has ever been painted in this world. And if it could be done, it would come as near resembling the woman I am as those descriptions which I have so carefully set down for your consideration.

The end would have come, anyway, because I had already observed that, while the Colonel had quite a figure for a man of his years and stepped with splendid military precision, still he had 'clergymen's knees,' if you know what that means, and it was clear to me that he was not long for this world. After enjoying the distinction of being a Circuit Rider's Widow for so many years, there might be a sigh of relief, but not anything like the distinction in being an Unknown Colonel's

Widow. Besides, on the word of no end of doctors I am already booked to meet Lundy myself in Paradise presently; and I certainly could not bear to face Lundy feeling like a grass widow, which I am sure would be exactly the sensation I should have.

I said the end came, and from this point I might put a better face on it by writing in a bit of fiction, but what is the use when Nature laid the scene for us and finished the drama with a wit that was near to being comedy? Only, you should bear in mind that comedies in real life are frequently underwritten by pathos. It is the harlequin humor of his neighbors that makes a man's life appear amusing.

One evening I accepted an invitation to dine with the Colonel. I wore my slimmest, sleek black satin frock, my large oval black onyx pin, inlaid with white flowers, and merely felt the fair rose of fame in my hair, which is so finely threaded with gray as only to prove that the bright color of it is real and not dyed in. I also carried the only lace handkerchief I ever possessed. This is the one habit of simpering feminine sweetness that I have. But when I am dressed up I would no more go without my handkerchief than I would be seen without any other of my outer garments. The trouble is that I belong to that school of women who invariably drop their handkerchiefs when they rise from the table. Some of the noblest men in this country have gone down upon their elegant knees and wholly disappeared beneath the drooping tablecloth to recover and restore mine. I am always embarrassed. I know that I have forced a small and unforgivable indignity upon man, but what can I do? At the moment of rising I simply cannot remember to seize my handkerchief and

prance out with it, like a flimsy token of my gender, as I came in with it.

We dined pleasantly; the food was good, the music entrancing, and the conversation was exceptionally interesting. The Colonel added some finishing touches of praise to the adorable personality with which he had so gallantly endowed me. I remember particularly his saying my white-flowered onyx breastpin was 'in character,' because this reminded me of that chain of tiny golden blossoms I craved, and of how much more becoming to me it might have been than the severe piety of the grand old piece I was wearing.

When at last we arose from the table, I dropped my handkerchief, as usual! I would gladly have turned my back upon it and gone ahead, but the provoking thing had fallen somewhat to the side and lay in plain view between us. I kept my own eyes innocently lifted, but I saw the Colonel drop his like a curse on that handkerchief. As he slashed upward with the same look, I caught it for the briefest moment full in the face, and knew what a martinet this officer had been about the buckles and breeches of his soldiers. I had barely time to reflect what a fool any woman would be to assume the married rôle of mess sergeant to such a man, when I saw the flash of his anger break, and him change into the pathetic figure of an old man mottled purple with the flash of something deeper than mere embarrassment.

A very small incident may become the most humiliating by reason of its apparent insignificance. What I perceived was that this resplendent old soldier knew he could not risk his knees to stoop in that public place to pick up my handkerchief, which was demanding before

all the people around us to be restored to the lady with whom the Colonel had just dined.

All this was seen, meant, and felt in the briefest moment, then a passing waiter snatched the handkerchief from the floor and restored it to me, else, to this day, I flinch, perspire, and close my eyes in horror at the thought of what might have happened! For I am certain that if he had bent even one knee to the floor in the effort to reclaim this handkerchief, he could not have risen again to his standing rank without an obvious effort, possibly a groan, and before so many people! As it was, we made what I felt at the time was a rather splendid exit, he tall, with the eagle-beaked face and sizzling blue eyes of a fine old fighting man, reared back, walking stiffly, as Sothern used to do when he played Hamlet (and nobody to suspect that he was obliged to walk this way!), while I stepped sweetly and elegantly, looking high and innocent of myself as usual.

But the Colonel was a changed man. The moment we were seated in one of those inside social playgrounds of a fashionable hotel, he began speaking in short, jerky sentences, voice roughened by emotion, the way a man speaks when he is shedding tears inside, even if the occasion is not tragic enough for tears, but important on account of some effect he desires to produce. And like any other brave man who has been cornered, he went straight to the point, which none of them will do with a woman, brave or otherwise, so long as it suits his purposes or vanity better to conceal the point.

He said that he had not known that he had knees until after a certain campaign in a bad weather sector in France. Snow all the winter, slush and rain all the

spring, no sun, no rest, no suitable dry place for headquarters. Fighting, marching, anxiety, sleeplessness! 'Rheumatism! Madam, rheumatism, not wounds, is what I got in France!' he exclaimed bitterly, meaning that he preferred to have been shot to pieces.

I tried to interrupt him by saying how any one with a spark of idealism must admire a man who had suffered so much in the discharge of his duties on the field of battle.

'But no wounds, Madam, only a pain in my knees!' he almost bawled. 'I do not know if you realize, Madam, how difficult it is for an officer of my rank to incur the nobler risks of battle! He is behind the lines, relatively safe, receiving information, sending orders, directing the engagement!'

I perceived that now for the first time he was conferring the impersonal title of 'Madam' upon me. Still I met him gallantly in defense of his reputation as a brave warrior, which is the duty of a woman under these circumstances. I lifted my handkerchief, waved it entreatingly, trying to flag him down before he revealed all of his symptoms. He shot only a hot glance at the handkerchief, meaning that he hoped I should not drop it again, and went on telling me what he had done and suffered trying to recover the suppleness of his knees.

The tables were completely turned. Not another word escaped him about the beauty of my soul, and what a delightful person I was, along the lines of praise he had been building me for seven rich days. My cathedral image fell down, the rose of fame I had been wearing in the spirit faded. I became what I really am, a good kind old person with the right gift for expressing

A DRINK FROM THE GOURD

startled admiration and patient condolence. He was determined to decorate himself with all the pains he had suffered, including the loss of his dear wife. I inferred from the application of the adjective 'dear' to her memory that this had been a legitimate loss which did not occur through the divorce courts, because I have never known a man to mention a divorced wife as still dear to him. And in one of those involuntary flashes of mischievous wit, I could not resist congratulating her with a sort of spiritual handclasp for having passed in the nick of time to escape the conversational anguish of her rheumatic Colonel. I do not suppose she appreciated my point of view, even if my 'message' reached her. For faithful women do dearly love sick husbands.

I am obliged to set these circumstances down, not to make light of this game old warrior, but in order to indicate how this affair ended before I could end it in a gladder manner, and how we found ourselves upon the normal grounds of middle-aged comradeship, simply by leaving Nature to betray the Colonel and show him up without committing an indignity against romance. Romance belongs to youth. Let any man or woman try to imitate its charm and loveliness late in life and they both become ridiculous. They make Nature laugh.

After this we were good friends so long as I remained in that city, though not earnest companions, because I wearied of the pathological reports of his case which the very sight of me seemed to inspire. But if we met by some mischance, I would say: 'Good-morning, Colonel! How is the infantry coming on to-day?' Which I think was a clever figure of speech in view of

the fact that it would hardly be admissible for the kindest-hearted woman to ask a man how his legs felt, especially in a public place, like the lobby of a hotel.

The Colonel would immediately join me, even if he had been going in a lateral direction, and begin to abuse his 'infantry' as, out of some delicacy to my own rank, I hurried him away. He was capable of announcing in his parade-ground voice that his 'confounded knees' had 'buckled' on him the night before. We both invariably glanced apprehensively at the short flight of steps which led to the gallery above where we were wont to hold a clinic conversationally. Then we passed on discreetly and took the elevator going up. I had the advantage of him in this matter, because I knew he could not negotiate those steps, but he never suspected my own breathless condition. From first to last I resisted the temptation to change the subject of his string-halted knees by springing the news on him of my own badly inflated heart, because I have observed that while one invalid may experience the keenest satisfaction in discussing his symptoms with another invalid, there is no such thing as fair play between them. He is bored if she tries to give him the history of her own case. So I held my peace, because a woman cannot afford to bore a man without offending her own dignity. Besides, my notion is that the less she tells him about any kind of heart she has, the better it sounds.

One of the differences gender makes between men and women is that if a man is young, he is almost sure to ingratiate himself with the woman who attracts him by remorseful references to his dark and humid past. This is his way of intimating that her perpetual presence alone can make his future clear as goodness at noonday

and dry as a preacher's pantry. But if he is old and broken, he is looking for the woman he needs and he relates his afflictions. Job would have been ten times as vocative if he had been a widower and his three friends had been women! He will confess the very bunions on the bottom of his feet, but not on any account does she ever get from him the least hint of his dark past, no matter how starless it was nor how humid. He has learned the sense of one kind of silence and has lost by natural disintegration the sense to keep quiet about his physical infirmities. The safest thing to do in the situation I found myself in is to lay wreaths of sympathetic words, bright with flowering terms of admiration, upon him and let it go at that. My own plan is to assume no more responsibilities, however ennobling, and to shirk as many of those I already have as possible. I may not be noble enough, but I am too tired now to take the least interest in glorifying myself.

It is not often that we can tell to the very minute when we had a certain dream. I had this unique experience at fifteen minutes to seven o'clock on the morning of June the thirtieth as I lay asleep in my room at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

I dreamed that I was in a great ship on a rough sea. Almost immediately I was awakened by the creaking of the timbers of this ship. I sat up in bed, saw the sun shining in the buildings across the street, no ocean waves anywhere. Still waves of sufficient violence were passing underneath everything to cause the oranges to jump out of the basket on the table, roll the length of the room, then as we seemed to go down into the trough

of the waves, they rolled back against the opposite wall.

I am subject to seasickness, and now I had as bad an attack of it as I ever suffered on an ocean liner. Some cross person may say this was due entirely to fear. That is possible, though I have always carried my fears as gracefully as the ablest gentleman can carry his liquor.

I perceived that we were having a 'slight tremor' of the earth, and the moment I was able to recover a normal interest in surviving it I staggered to the door of my room, opened it, and stood there, lest the wrenching of the timbers should jam the door and make escape impossible. I was not dressed for any kind of public appearance, still I meant to make one the moment I was sure of my stomach which was still squeamish.

A curious kind of human silence had fallen like a pall over that noisy city. No sounds save the screeching of the timbers in that steel-ribbed hotel, and the ominous shuddering rumble which always accompanies one of these bad dreams of the earth.

Presently I saw a man come hastily out of his room at the far end of the corridor and make for the staircase, which was a short distance beyond where I was standing. He was carrying a bag from which dangled the sleeve of a badly frightened shirt. With the other palsied hand he tried to button his collar. He was walking pitch-kneed with an involuntary swagger due to the wavelike undulations of the floor. His face showed a gray-green pallor — but I am casting no reflections upon his complexion, for my own must have been equally deficient in normal coloring.

Before he reached me, I recognized him as one of the

celebrities staying in the hotel, a rationalist of purest ray serene; that is to say, an atheist, who was delivering a series of lectures before one of the cults in that city, already too much cultured with mere 'cults.'

I had not met him. We were mutually agreed on that point. Still you cannot be too proud socially, nor even morally, in an earthquake. Like many another woman in the distress of terror who instinctively places her trust in the adjacent man, I contemplated joining him in his flight. But when he was near enough for one to hear the low, hallowed tones of prayer, I perceived that he was addressing God with commendable fervor.

I drew back, because you cannot join a person when he is praying. I have better manners. Besides, the idea of being mixed up with an atheist who had become a contemptible mendicant to the Lord, when he had been earning his living by denying him, was too much for me.

He had scarcely time to join that involuntary prayer service going forward, with a dense crowd taking part in it, before the earth got easy and began to quiet down.

I remember no more until eleven o'clock when I found myself fully dressed lying upon the bed. If I had not been asleep, I had been unconscious. I prefer to believe that I had the nerve to fall asleep, but the facts do not bear me out in this vanity, for it was three days before I was able to be moved to a hospital where I spent the next two weeks fretting the doctors and nurses, and trying to make up my mind where I should go next.

VIII

THAT cannot be said of me which is sometimes said of the recently departed: 'She never murmured, nor complained. She was always cheerful, and bore her afflictions with Christian fortitude.' It depends entirely upon what kind of afflictions mine are, how I bear them. If they are the ordinary adversities one may meet standing up face forward, I can do very well, without shouting about being the captain of my soul. But I have no becoming gifts of endurance when I am seriously ill and my afflictions consist of sharp pains in the body. I can behave no better than a man under these circumstances. So far from 'murmuring,' I speak with formidable distinctness and complain furiously of everything. I lose my manners, scorn fortitude, and practice an acid use of words unbelievable in a former Christian woman. The hospital records I have made in living have been brief, but lurid. Years and years ago I had a series of these experiences in the Old Saint Thomas Hospital in Nashville. If they kept charts of my behavior as well as of my temperature, they have some filed there with my unhappy name attached that must read like those of a damned soul.

The first time was when I submitted to an appendicitis operation; and the record will show that two nurses resigned from my case in high dudgeon. There were other similar occasions when I weeded a wide row among them. And during the eight days after a dreadful gall-stone operation I retired four nurses in quick

succession and was at my last gasp when the sixth took to her heels, due entirely to the powerful capacity I developed for personal and damaging criticism.

This hospital is managed by Catholic Sisters. Therefore, do not tell me there is anything radically wrong with the way a good Catholic practices her religion. It is the wisest, kindest, most patient form of godliness toward sick people in this world. Lundy and I were desperately poor then, but these Sisters always gave me a beautiful room and made voluntary reductions in my expenses. Also they bore with me as if I had been a rich patient with a good disposition.

Lundy was very ill there during these dreadful years, and in his delirium he concentrated on Sister Vincent, who had the smiling face of a little old wrinkled saint beneath the wide white wings of her heavenly headdress. And Lundy — who was ever a lover of women, and the better, nobler they were the more his devotion increased — was so confused in his delirium by the spreading white wings of Sister Vincent's cap that he favored her alternately by reciting Isaac Watts's great hymns and the most fervid odes he could remember from Horace, reserving Homer's Iliad to recite on general principles, all in original. But was Sister Vincent dismayed? Far from it. She accepted all his contributions like a blessed Damosel of sixty and encouraged him to soothe his strange soul with these libations of Greek and Latin poetry in her honor.

Years and years later my little Faith died there. On all of these occasions I was blessed with the sympathy and the tender mercies of these Sisters, and I am copying the record of their goodness here for the benefit of those Protestants who make a virtue of

speaking ill of the character of Catholic saints. I could never become a Catholic, but I shall be very much surprised if I do not meet as many of this creed in heaven as any other. Certainly if I ever feel the symptoms of a serious illness coming on, I shall make all haste to find shelter under the white-winged heads of the Sisters of Saint Thomas Hospital, having my very grave doubts about the secular patience of a Protestant hospital in dealing with the contumacious disposition I develop under these circumstances. What I mean in this connection is that the Catholics are the only people I know gifted with the instinct for founding hospitals who make this business a part of their religious duties.

Meanwhile the only praise that can be bestowed upon me as a patient is that I always made a hasty and complete recovery and sallied forth in a good humor with the firm determination never to go back. Thus fifteen years passed before I was laid low again in 1925. It was on the Fourth of July that I was obliged to go to this little hospital in Los Angeles, suffering a severe relapse of the heart trouble that had merely kept me peacefully in bed for two months at Santa Barbara. It was a place devoted almost exclusively to the treatment of heart patients; that is to say, those disorders which lead to dilated hearts and kindred troubles. It must have been founded on purpose only about six inches from the ground, one story in height, which, if you do not know it, is very soothing to the nerves of a person who has been shaken senseless in the fifth-story room of a thirteen-story hotel. There were only twenty beds in it for patients and about the same number of nurses.

I was very ill this time, and correspondingly incorrigible, passing in swift succession under the ministrations of all the nurses in that hospital. Three new ones were taken on, and it may have been only coincidence that each one of them was put in charge of my case.

The first four days were the worst. After that I began to mend and make short intervals of peace with the nurses, until presently I was so far recovered as to refuse to allow one of them in the room longer than necessary to perform her duties; because this is one thing I cannot endure — some one watching me recover. Good Lord, deliver me forever from a 'special' nurse! These people were very kind to me. Still, I stick to it, I prefer white-winged-headed Sisters passing noiselessly about when I think I may be going to die in spite of everything.

I remember one little scene, scarcely worth recording here but for the fact that it released my mind along the trail of bright memories, and because if ever my mind escapes the body of me, it rides back to health and cheerfulness.

Through no more than a keyhole, so to speak, in the shrubbery I saw a little boy sitting beside a small table in front of a soft-drink stand on the street. He was consuming ice cream with the piety and earnestness of the very young whose appetites for sweets makes a religion of their innocent little bodies. An old man sat on the opposite side of the table, smoking a pipe and vicariously enjoying the child's solemn greed. I inferred that he was the benefactor who had furnished the ice cream. But it was the little boy who riveted my attention. His hair was red, rumpled, and shining like gold;

his eyes were blue, tip-tilted nose, froward chin, wide mouth, long upper lip, obviously Irish, no matter what the nationality of his parents might be. But the entrancing thing was his freckles. His face was dusted bright with freckles exactly the color of his hair.

The moment he had the last spoonful of cream, he nudged the world with one thin shoulder, cocked his head to one side, obviously making a wink of himself at the old man. Then he capered to his feet, took aim at the ground with a practiced eye, turned himself bottom upwards, thin legs and bare feet waving as he jiggered around walking on his hands. Quite as suddenly he reversed himself and went capering out of sight, accompanied by the old man, though for a time I could still hear the high tenor of his voice, talking very fast, probably bragging, telling a great tale.

How many of these little red-headed boys I had known, I reflected, recalling them like bright little Johnny-jump-ups through all the years of my life: in school, when I was another child, in the street before the parsonage, fidgeting in Sunday-School classes. Never have I been more than a short time anywhere that one of them did not show up — never two. Apparently they do not hunt adventures in pairs. Always scrawny, thin-legged, with that same piercing tenor voice. I do not remember one of them who was more than ten years of age. But he was always impishly witty, ready to show off at the slightest provocation, ready to laugh, ready to quarrel, and ready to fight without malice or gain in the fray, and invariably in a high good humor, defeat sitting as lightly upon his head as victory does upon the bravest. There was no such thing as diminishing their heads. They glowed in

the very dust, and I do not recall ever seeing one in tears.

What became of them? What happened to silence and steady them, and give them that air of reserve all the red-headed men I have ever known wear like an invisible armor? — I do not know. The light goes out of them. No matter how much they achieve, it is done in quietness. The world seems to snuff the bright flame of their spirit as it never does that of little red-headed girls, or the women they become.

I had no visitors in this hospital. Nothing seems to have happened during the weeks I was there. Yet, by referring to my mind's sketch-book, it seems that I went on thinking as usual and recording my reflections. I am venturing to copy some of them here, not as one betrays his diary by his various systems of philosophy worked out to meet the situation of that day or even that moment. My thoughts must have been dwelling on happiness, which has become a dear obsession with me, when I wrote this one:

July 10th. Happiness is not a gift. It does not depend on temperament, nor the lack of temperament, nor even on wealth or health, but it is a sort of diplomatic relation we maintain toward ourselves and other people. I have had to live a long time to learn that this is a very delicate matter which we treat roughly, never realizing that every man is the ambassador of his own desires at the court of honor, conscience. I must learn to treat myself with more respect, as I do any other worthy person, instead of taking so much pains to command the respect of others. A foolish waste of effort. I am the chief one to please. Still, if the nurse bolts in to-morrow morning and wakens me by slamming the morning paper down on my feet, I will not reduce her to tears by telling her that she has missed her vocation and should take a position in a roller-skating contest where she can make as

much fuss as her peculiar nature demands, without disturbing other people. This is a form of shirt-sleeve diplomacy which will not add appreciably to my happiness. I might have done much better in the world if I had smiled more and been less truthful under provocation. One should censor the truth she speaks even more than the scandals she tells, because it is easier to get away with the scandal. There is something frightfully personal about the truth, especially if one signs it with her own name. I have known strangers a thousand miles away to take umbrage at some little duodecimal of veracity I published. If only I could write a tale that was a lie out of the whole cloth, not one sentence of secret wit in it to search the conscience of the reader, I might become a popular author. Or, if I could write a bessie-bug romance of sweetness and light, showing the hero and heroine reciting themselves prettily as ordinary people when they are thinking up for you what they want you to think of them, I might produce a 'best seller'! — Sour grapes, my dear — addressing myself — the damning truth is that such writers have more genius than you have. They are the real interpreters of what men and women want to believe they are, while you are an old vulgarian of the truth who betrays too much of what we all really are. You can never become a popular writer. People will read you in secret, but they will not praise you from the housetops. They cannot afford to do so. Your happiness consists in making more genuflections to yourself and giving yourself those same old airs of immortality which do not depend upon any kind of earthly fame.

July 6th. My Mother's birthday. I wonder what kind of woman she would have been if she had lived to be as old as I am now. I have a feeling that she would have 'arrived,' become long since settled in a sort of grand peace of mind. Her hair would be white and she would seem much older than I do, and certainly she would not be gadding about the world at fifty-six making a Happy Pilgrimage. She would have given up happiness long ago as a mirage of the youthful mind, and made herself contented in her little house.

It is queer how I miss her still, the things she used to say to me, the everlasting business of her good stern deeds to me. And the way she would soften into the most adorable tenderness if I fell sick with some childish complaint. That was heaven for me, to lie in the big white company bed in a frilly nightgown and have Mother feed me sweetened rice and milk with a spoon. There can be no kinder eyes in heaven than hers were then. She had soft hands, and it was a blessing to have her lay one upon my brow. If it was hot and dry, she gave me four drops of niter in a little water, and I got myself praised for taking this medicine 'like a good child.' It was very unusual in those days for me to figure in her great and exacting opinion as a 'good child,' quite the contrary. So I prayed fervently that my fever might not abate and that I might show my holiness by taking even bitterer medicine without shrinking from the draught or even 'making a face.'

She was a very busy woman, never doing anything with her own hands that I remember which could not be done with a needle and thimble, but she was always directing the servants, having something baked, something rubbed or scrubbed, flowers tended, garden walks swept. Still, if I arrived at the eminence of lying in the company bed only through illness, she found time to sit beside me. I do not recall that she made the least effort to entertain me. I did not require that. Just to have her forgive me all my trespasses and sins and sit there with her kind eyes bestowing love upon me was more gratifying to my little tadpole soul than if an angel of God had sat there with grandly folded wings. She asked me no searching questions which was her daily business if I was up and abroad, able to commit my usual transgressions, but her suspicions were concentrated on my tongue. Once in so often she required me to open my mouth and stick it out, whereupon she would regard it as one stares at his bitterest enemy. But I never flinched or feared. It was my tongue, not me, she suspected. Sometimes if she perceived the worst I would have the inestimable privilege of showing off by taking the bitter medicine.

I must have been the simplest of all young creatures, be-

cause years passed before I had the least idea of why I had to show my tongue to mother if I was sick. To me it was one of her inscrutable acts of Providence. My part in it was to exceed all other children in the length to which I could expose my tongue. If she had told me to swallow it, I would have endeavored to do so.

I have often wondered if Mother ever realized how I feared and worshiped her. Since from the first I was her most wayward and disobedient child, I do not suppose she did. But long afterward these earlier experiences with her kind heart and sternly judging finite mind gave me an idea about God's better comprehension and provision from the beginning for some of His worst sinners. I have known many a bad man who craved peace and righteousness more earnestly than any saint who knows how to crave such blessings, being in less conscious need of them. This is the reason why I believe in what is sneeringly called 'death-bed repentance.' Some of these people must be put in a strait-jacket of pain, or cornered in a tight place, before they can leave off their evil deeds long enough to be innocent enough to get the right sense of God, divide His wisdom and goodness from the somewhat precarious experiences they have had with the cruder virtues and pieties of mere men. And a death-bed is the straitest jacket of all.

Mother was bent and determined that I should become a very good woman before this embarrassing emergency faced me. She was right about that, but her severities were never equaled by her mercies when I was a child unless I fell sick. Now, however, it is these manifestations of her that I recall most vividly.

Last night I could not sleep. One little pain reached through my breast and stayed there. I thought of Mother, how she would look bending over me, what she would say — 'Not feeling so well to-night, my dear?' — No more than that, but she would be sitting there beside me the whole night through. So, I went on encouraging and comforting myself with a few kind words, bordering closer to praise, even flattery, than she ever came when I lay so restless and temporarily good in the company bed long ago.

No matter how old we live to be, there remains far within us the poor little ghost of the child we used to be that walks sometimes in the dark like any other phantom stirred by memories — and not always in the dark. If we come by accident upon a scene laid in bright loveliness upon the earth, as so many of our scenes were then, that same little ghost touches our dreariness and loneliness with the glory of its presence. Thus, I can never go where wild larkspur blooms in ragged rainbows on our Southern hillsides without being joined at once by a sort of invisible little girl wearing a blue-checked, sparrow-tailed apron, who used to spend hours on the old Avenue at home making wreaths and wreaths of these flowers.

I must have been in a bad way the next day, because I record briefly under the date of July 7th:

Another sleepless night! Nurse gave me a cup of tea, made of a Swiss herb, called 'Setabroth,' she told me. She might as well have made it of dead grass. Sickening stuff, and nothing came of it, not even one little dozing dream.

Apparently I spent this day looking out of my window through that 'green keyhole' in the shrubbery, watching people go by, tagging them with a line or two; writing other short reflections which have no logical sequence. I am copying some of them here as they were set down in that sadly scrawled sketch-book of thought. They will indicate how far the mind may swing this way and that when the body that contains it is capable of making no effort at all. I am not bragging about these paltry thoughts, but I do wonder how the rank and cankered materialist accounts for the fact that a very sick man can go on thinking clearly and intelligently even with the very door of death open before him, while if a mere animal sickens, it lets go, sinks into the same coma that has overtaken its body

and is incapable of any voluntary use of its senses. I know! He would begin at once to tell some tale of the brain power in his wounded dog. I could set down a dozen similar instances about what my old Great Dane did in his last days. He used to call me every night to bring him a drink of water. He slept in the sewing-room, and when the fire died down, he would howl for some one to bring wood and make another fire. When he grew so infirm that he could not scratch his own fleas, he made a row in this house until some one found the very place and the very flea he wanted scratched. A general brushing made him as mad as fire on these occasions. And at the last gasp he must have some one to hold his great paw, somebody's knee upon which to rest his head. But dogs do not count in a contention like this. They are indeed animal, but they are clairvoyant. Their strange quality is to be able to borrow something of what we are. Through years of association they practice our feelings, fears; they follow our minds as the blind see and know by touch. Let the materialist make his point with a sick cow, any animal not intimately associated with man. They have no mind, only instincts, and they die in the slumber of these same instincts as unmindful of life and death as the leaves that fall.

But never mind! It is useless to contend with a materialist. He is one because he lacks the courage to be anything else. He lacks the dog's clairvoyance to reach his master's mind. Here are the little scripts I wrote during that long bright, windy, dusty day as I lay in the hospital in Los Angeles:

Just now I saw a preacher go by. An old man. I recognized him not so much by his long-tailed black coat as by

the dim old Isaiah expression of his face, lonesome and wishful as Isaiah would have looked if he had lost his position as prophet. He must have been retired from the ministry, out here for his health. He reminds me of an old local preacher Lundy and I used to know. Spiritually speaking, he gave the impression of having come up out of the backwoods of the Old Testament, fierce and proud and truly good. Always militant, never humble except when he led in prayer. He had a goose-stepping soul. Gone long since, and right now I can see him heeling and toeing it with sublime precision among the heavenly hosts.

Preachers are queer people. We all are, but in them it is more noticeable, these strictly human absurdities. Years ago there lived in Georgia a Methodist itinerant, distinguished for his learning, modesty, and the remarkable Christian meekness of his character. Then in his old age some university, that could not leave well-enough alone, conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He was never the same afterwards. That title went to his head as his great reputation for piety never did. He was unbearably conceited and demanded that his name should always be set off by this tail of his title. The same thing happened to me, a good many years ago now. I shot up into a Doctor of Literature, and thought no more about it. For I was well then and going strong, but now sometimes I know precisely how that old preacher felt. He was losing out by reason of his many years of hardship in the itinerancy, and at the very last he wanted to cash in on that little D.D. honor. As a rule I prefer to be called 'Corra Harris' without any blandishments, but to-day, when I am so low in my spirit, I wish some one would come in and call me 'Doctor Harris.' A little spoofing like that might help me to fetch a surge upward where I belong.

We are creatures of unhappiness according to the habits of the mortal mind. Sometimes mine seems to be already awake and waiting for me when I awaken in the morning, and it says to me: 'Get up and worry! You are really tired of all this peace and good will. It is a pose and you know it.

You are very ill, among strangers, three thousand miles from home, and this doctor you have none too well pleased with the responsibility of your case. When the nurse comes in presently to tell you, professionally, how well you are looking, and she is sure you must have slept soundly last night, why don't you let go and tell her what you think of her, the whole kit and b'ilin'? Do you good!' — and so on and so forth. Still, I held my peace on principle when she did come in, poor thing, not knowing what risks she was taking. At that I did not feel so virtuous. I am wondering if any one can earn a reputation for sweetness, patience, and light without becoming a sort of sublimated liar.

When one acts with what proves to be astounding wisdom, he can rarely ever give a reason for it. This accounts for that little peculiarity in women, who so frequently answer 'Because,' when you ask them why they did this or that very smart thing. They have neither the brains, initiative, nor power to achieve that men have, but the last one of them has much more unspeakable, unintelligible wisdom than men will ever get.

It has occurred to me that our sins are dearer to us than our virtues, because we are apt to boast of the latter, but we are sure to defend the former. I suppose it is because our sin is more intimate, private, and personal to us, while it is practically impossible to achieve a virtue which does not belong to a great many other people, who have worn it and enhanced it more than we can.

The pathetic thing is that hypocrites are much more sensitive about their reputations than really good people, because they know we have the drop on them, poor souls!

There is an element of ill-health in our times, which, I believe, is due to the fact that too many of the wrong kind of people are beginning to understand human nature. They seek to know the worst, and believe it. They are the passionate collectors of bad rumors. They are the poets of

scandal. They are much more inclined to praise a book, a picture, an opera than they are the noblest man or woman. The idea is to wink a deeper meaner wisdom of that man, meaning that, aside from all this heroic glamour he has stirred up by a great deed, they see through that and regard him as a human being, no better than the rest of us, probably not so good. Away with heroes and saints! They are all scamps at bottom; let us get down to the bald, bare facts of human nature and have done with this silly idealism! They are the socialists of the evil mind who would destroy the property rights of good people in their own virtues.

Therefore, if you are sensible, sequester your estate in honor and righteousness. Never discuss yourself or your God. If you claim a little merit, you are an egotist, which is the most damnable verdict any other egotist can bring against you. If you profess interest or confidence in God, you are obviously a hypocrite, because none of these torn-down students of human nature will entertain the idea for a moment that you are sincere in your profession of faith.

It has come to this at last that the Lord God who made us alone understands us well enough to keep a faith in us that cannot be shaken. We must be some kind of profitable investment He has made in His own far-off image or the processes of nature which He has foreordained would not go on producing us.

So, we may as well go ahead in good heart and risk the jump. No evil can befall us; only misfortunes and vicissitudes incident to mortal life. Not only is man never damned, except transiently by his own hands, but he cannot be — not with these everlasting provisions made for his comfort, happiness, and great salvation, which are as fixed as any other laws of creation. Does any one believe that the Almighty would make something alive in His own image and then leave everything prepared to degrade and mar this image? On the contrary, He leaves us free to work out our own fate, because He alone understands the supernal powers of human nature and knows that we must choose the face and form of every goodness for our final countenance. A man — every man — may drag himself down for genera-

tions, tear off all his creeds and virtues — they have done it — yet do they rise again, more splendid, and create within themselves a cleaner heart.

Whenever things seem to me to be going wrong in this world, I attribute it to the short-sighted vision of my mortal mind, grown old and a bit fearsome. In my heart I know we are only turning a sharp corner in thinking a trifle awkwardly, to be sure, but we will get by presently into the straight road predestined for us from the beginning beyond every turn. Else God is the devil, and no devil could last as a god. We ourselves would rise and cast him from our own heights. The stars would fall. This universe would go to pieces like a foolish invention that had had a monkey wrench flung into its gears.

I am by this as that brave old fool of a preacher was when he shouted from his pulpit into the face of all astronomers: 'The sun do move!' (And now it turns out the astronomers admit that the sun has his orbit and traveling orders, only through a vaster space than the old preacher would conceive!) Just so, all dust and pig-snouted scientists to the contrary, I say, we do live forever, whether the worlds are without end or not — worlds are only the pedestals for life; they can grow old and be replaced!

But we go on forever within the circling will of the shepherding God who knows, if we do not, where the next fold lies between the sheltering immensities of His Eternity. 'Asleep in Jesus' is only a sentimental figure of speech, made of our childishness. Jesus does not sleep. He is risen! Neither shall we. If we sleep in death, we have never lived, and cannot live again.

What happens to us during that earth to earth and dust to dust period of our mere bodies, I do not know. The Catholics have the bulge on us in this matter with their purgatory doctrine, but that doctrine does not appeal to me. It smacks too much of mortal meanness in God. My notion is that we shall go on, straight ahead — I leave those who make a spiritual geography of the Hereafter by dividing it into ascending planes to their one-two-three-four imaginations! — and that we shall arrive, never, but keep going on forever

toward the Author and Finisher of our Faith. Oh! happy, happy pilgrimage, through seas of immortal spaces, across worlds of life and yet life more abundant. What a landscape, my Lord, of Thy glories and our glories to pass through, with the stars for Amens! Why should I fret, then, to be lying here for a few days in the hollow of Thy hand, no distance at all from the past or the future, present forever in time, with nothing that can possibly hinder me from making the great journey?

Still, mortally speaking, I wish I might sleep a little tonight just for a change!

July 8th. Wednesday morning, bright and fair as usual. I have found no weather yet in California worth mentioning, though the air certainly is good, dry, and bracing in the hottest summer's day. But the weather of my own mind is much better, calmer. I slept last night soundly, for the first time since that earthquake in Santa Barbara, which caused 'No damage in Los Angeles.' But just look at me! If I had been some kind of reënforced concrete building, my windows would not have been shattered, nor my walls cracked. As it is, it seems to me that I have been considerably damaged. But this is not meant to indicate the definition of 'damage' current the world over. If something untoward happens to property, that is 'damage,' but if a man's leg is broken in a flood, he is a 'casualty.' If a good old person gets her invalid heart shaken out of its socket in an earthquake, that does not count as damage either, but staying in the hospital to raise my blood pressure to something like normal and to reduce this breathlessly rapid pulse will cost more than it would to replace all the window lights in one of those fine buildings that held on to its lights during this last jostle of the earth.

But let that go. It is not logical to be so mercenary about hospital expenses when one has been giving herself hallelujah airs about the advantages of being immortal. In spite of what I wrote yesterday about the grand adventure of traveling the uncharted spaces past all the Amen stars in the firmament, I am quite willing to spend all I have for the privilege of a much more limited existence. Other worlds may be

better, but I prefer this one, beset as it is by storms, earthquakes, and floods.

What fills me with admiration is those people at Santa Barbara — letters from them this morning, all cheerful, one or two a bit tittery from that courage which inspires the brave to laugh while their teeth are still chattering from the terrors they have passed through. They are already scraping up the wreckage made by the earthquake and planning to build a finer, more symmetrical city of Spanish architecture. Before this time another year it will be standing there like a lonely old masterpiece in the sun. Let those who doubt the elastic firmness and granite grandeur of humanity watch how men and women face an overwhelming disaster. They do it like the sons and daughters of the Almighty!

I recognize the evidence of my improved condition to-day by the rising animus of my mind — no longer so ostentatiously heavenward bound in the spirit, my dears! — biting at the news in the morning paper like the old schoolma'am termagant I am becoming to my day and generation. Plenty of good news always in a Western paper, but I am picking on the golf tournament they had somewhere yesterday, and the prize-fight they staged in this city last night. The champion on the links won a cup; the brute who has never done a day's work in his life, except with his murderous fists, received for beating up his antagonist a purse with more money in it than many an honest man can earn at hard labor in two lifetimes.

I am not in favor of this loving-cup business. In my opinion, the wrong people get the cups. If a man plays the best game of golf, or wins a swimming-match, or excels at a running high jump over a pole and can prove that he is an amateur, he gets a cup. But if he is a professional, he is degraded to the point of getting a purseful of money. If he has been the treasurer of a charity fund for years without stealing any of it, he receives a watch or cane as a reward. He may be a worthless person with a broken nose and a vicious eye, but if he becomes a sort of professional 'amateur' super-successful in the field of sports, he may have a whole cabinet filled with loving-cups. He can get one even by

entering his horse in an amateur race if the horse wins, whether he ever takes one brisk, dutiful step in living. Why have these people so much? Has any woman ever received such a token of praise as one silver teaspoon for being the faithful wife of a faithless husband and the devoted mother of ten children? If a widow indeed brings up a large family by the work of her hands and gets her sons and daughters honorably established in the world, does anybody give her a loving-cup? If they give her anything it is charity. Who ever heard of rewarding, with so much as a watch-fob, a poor man for being a good citizen, but if he manages to become a prominent citizen by hook or crook and has a bank filled with money, they are apt to compliment him with a loving-cup at a mass meeting of admirers. These swank ladies and sporting fellows are the ones who get all the trophies, and I say it is all wrong.

Why does not somebody think up a plan for rewarding the best amateur bootlegger with an honest-to-goodness drinking-cup of suitable design and of silver at least?

If they ever do I am entering 'Skippy' Hide here and now as a contestant.

'Skippy' is a merry-faced old moonshiner who lives far up in my mountains at home, when he is not serving a sentence in the chain gang. He is a thief, bootlegger, and bad man — but sometimes good. His father was a fierce old Christian of considerable means. And his brothers bear a 'good name.' Skippy himself started out years ago with the best intentions. He married a good girl, bought a farm, and set in to produce a family. In this he was notably successful, seven children in all, and there might have been more if he had not been obliged to waste so much of his paternal time in the chain gang. But he was handicapped from the first by his poverty. No one suspected that he was different from his respectable brothers until he proved his peculiar genius for overcoming this handicap. He had no money with which to buy farming tools, but when he needed one he fared forth in the dark, chose the best one he could find in the neighborhood, and took it home with him.

Skippy, you understand, was no writing-desk primitive

producing bad literature to debauch the minds of his fellow men. He was an out-and-out primitive with the laudable ambition to produce a living for his ever-increasing family. He worked hard with those tools, involuntarily loaned by his indignant neighbors, but he met their black accusatory looks with a grin and a twinkling eye. As time passed and his necessities increased, he extended his levies on the community for whatever he needed, whether it was a young chicken for his sick wife or a young heifer he fancied.

Nothing worse happened to him during this period than that he was 'turned out of the Church.' But he was not dismayed. He was bent and determined to get on in the world and he was as simple about that as Noah when Noah made his second start after the flood. So he founded a still — a small one that he could snatch up and run with if he heard the revenue officers coming. Now he flourished and was indeed a happy man.

But the way of some transgressors is hard, while others go on flourishing as usual like the green bay tree. Skippy belonged to the former class. His methods were too simple. He lacked the wit and acumen of the true financier. He was apprehended, tried, and sentenced to the chain gang for his sins. But no officer of the law has ever yet been swift enough or had the nose of a hunter keen enough to find his still. All he had to do was to serve his sentence, come back, and start that still to steaming out the reverent stuff. And he always did.

The one real misfortune to overtake him was that his father, grown old in his piety and bitterly ashamed of his son, disowned him and forbade him to enter his house. In the meantime Skippy's brothers, who still bear a good name, skinned the old man of all his substance, save this house and a few paltry acres. He was helpless and reduced to the direst poverty. Skippy became the humblest of benefactors to this father. He made contributions through the back door, hauled the old man's winter wood and cut it up, without ever daring to show his face inside.

This arrangement went on for years. When Skippy was not in the 'gang,' he was farming like a house afire all day,

making liquor and selling it at night. He had grown so incorrigibly bad by this time that no one ever called his name. He was a blot dyed deep in this community. Only his wife clave faithfully to him so long as she lived. Nobody knows how she managed to do it, because she was a 'teetotaler' and fiercely opposed to the making of liquor. Still she stuck to him and went on thrashing her children, trying to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Skippy fairly worshiped her. He would steal anything for her and swear he had bought it, not that it made the least difference to him how he came by it, but that her dear goodness might not be sullied by his sins.

I have always entertained a sort of shameful admiration for this man. I'd vote him a loving-cup if I could, though I doubt if he is in the 'amateur' class now, and a purse like those won by other less worthy professionals would be more in his line.

But for years I lost sight of him, because he passed out of the pale even of rumors in his evil courses, and I had never actually known him except by the trail of scandal and good deeds he left behind him.

To-day in a package of mail from home there was one from Mr. X, who enclosed a communication from Skippy, no doubt for the tang of unconscious humor in it, but, remembering his background, I am not amused:

'Kind friend, A rite smart while back before I was took out of the County I was at the Courthouse one day and seen a fine bunch of women come up before the Commishioners and tell 'em what was what about the fix our porper's farm was in, with scarcely a roof over their haids, and I seen the Churman duck hissen like he was feelin' it some and aimed to do somethin' about it, but they ain't done it yet. This means a rite smart to me. I am in the chain gang now, and hopin' to be pardoned soon, and may land rite strait at the porper's farm if I am. Because my folks is all scattered and gone and I ain't got nothin' but my repertation on account of not havin' no education and trainin' in honest toil till I kept on comin' here.

'So if you feel to do a kindness to a pore man that ain't

never done nobody no harm, please ast them County Commishioners if they aim to do anything towards fixin' up the porper's farm to make 'em comfortable. If they don't I might as well not git pardoned and stay where I am and spin my last years gittin' more trainin' in nothin' but honest toil which never paid outside, because I may need it afterwards because you never can tell what the hearafter will bring forwards and me not prepared no ways for it.

'This leaves me doing as well as can be expected, considering the fair we get to eat and hope it find you the same.

Your friend

SKIP HIDE

'P.S. They ain't no use to send my address. The gang moves to-morrer I don't know where. But if you write me here c/o The Boss I'll get it.'

I make no further reference to sleepless nights in this hospital, but it is easy to infer from the notes I go on making when I have been wakeful and restless. I am either spiteful or too infernally smart the next day. Here is one which indicates that I am awake at daybreak and in no complimentary mood to the sun, moon, or stars:

July 10*th*. These Western stars are pop-eyed, larger, more curious than ours are at home. A bunch of them stared through the window at me all night long — first time in my life I was ever tired of the stars! The moon sat up all night, making black shadows of lovely things outside. I do not hold with poets and lovers about the moon. She is no more than a bright vacuous fool of a countenance in the heavens — no expression. Always getting herself complimented with some figure of speech from a 'silver scimitar' to a 'yellow slice of melon'! The prettiest reference I have ever seen to her was made by Father Tabb, years ago when he caught sight of her riding high and dim in a clear morning sky. 'Yon pale ghost of yestere'en,' he calls her. But I cannot bear her when she

shines all night with no competition of braver brightness to soften her silliness. I am not complaining of the West, but I do think the heavenly bodies out here are a bit garish. The sun always rises with a swollen face, as if he had been up all of the night before, too lurid against the pale purity of dawn for sobriety.

Note written later on the same day: We may be saved by the devil after all. Here is news in the morning paper of Mr. Zukar's latest contract made with his youngest actress. She is sixteen. He employs her for two years on condition that she does not bob her hair, and uses neither rouge nor lipstick. She must dress modestly, and behave the same way on all occasions. What I mean is that it has been these girls of the stage and screen who have set the fashion for the modern girl's manners, clothes, morals, and scandals. Now it is the head of one of these big businesses who employs an actress on condition that she shall remain decent, modest, and clean-faced. A university course does not accomplish so much as that now.

On the same page the report of a putrefying lecture on 'Beauty' before a Woman's Club! I wish I knew what all this taking of vows to worship beauty means. Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' seems to me the most beautiful poem in the English language; even so, I was never entranced with the conclusion:

> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' — that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Sounds like an anticlimax to me. The singing loveliness of his imagery will last as long as words do without this quotation motto. Now it is a string dangling from that perfect thing which fools catch to swing by sillily.

In any case only great poets can afford to rave about beauty. Suppose it is necessary to your happiness, if you are an ordinary person why pretend that you are unusual in this particular? I know plain men and women who have lived all their lives among the most sublime beauties of nature, without tearing their hair about it. Yet loveliness is as essential

to their existence as food. They have no language to speak it and remain eloquently dumb. My notion about these beauty-ranters is that they have no deep sense of it and have learned to recite it like a creed, as so many Christians do their religion. As a rule they are short on the secret pieties of life, that prayer-goodness of the heart which goes with real genius for comprehending beauty.

I shall never forget my experience with a woman who had a decadent mania for what she called beauty, but who was a sort of artistic ape at plagiarizing the loveliness of colors. She had no sense beyond color and form. The holy significance of all these things in nature invariably escaped her. She could not see the beauty in homeliness produced by the hardships of virtue, like the fallen, withered rose of a good woman's face, who had lived a life of plainness with none of the luxuries of the senses to soften her features, who had been bleached by the courage of her years to the gray glory of majestic beauty. She could perceive the grace and loveliness of a tree, catch the color of its foliage with a sort of tricky swiftness of her brush, but she was one of Nature's idiots when it came to recognizing this tree as the elder brother of her own life that had sent its roots to drink of springs so deep they never fail, that had swung its mighty limbs in winds of prayers before she was born, that would sing its leaves to the summer skies a hundred years after she is dead, that will know the history of ages without the folly of speech. Color and form are only the outsides of things. The true meaning and significance lies within. And your professional beauty lovers rarely ever suspect them.

I saw the statement in this morning's paper that Mr. Sinclair Lewis was so weary and disgusted with his fame that he says he would be willing to crawl a thousand miles on his knees into obscurity where he might rest from so much contemptible praise. He is joshing himself unnecessarily about his fame. It has already degenerated into an unsavory notoriety. He has only to keep on the way he is going in order to rest in complete oblivion without bruising his knees. 'Babbitt' ruined Sinclair Lewis as a popular American

writer. There are more than a million Rotarians and Kiwanis in this country. Every time they have a convention or a grand public meeting they put up their best orator to praise Babbitt and to down Lewis. Babbitt, God bless you, was an honest, virtuous, industrious business man, typical of ten thousand Rotarians, and they are mad as fire about the way this light young author traduced and betrayed him to the wives and daughters of all up-and-going business men. Observe how the press trails Mr. Lewis these days, always to tell some bad news on him. The Rotarians are getting in their work. No wonder he begins to long for refuge in the vast wilderness of obscurity.

Douglas Fairbanks must get a trifle weary of casting the famous Fairbanks smile into the camera, but he has this advantage over Lewis, he can grin and grin without being obliged to study constantly this tooth-toting copy of his face. The people do that for him with ever-increasing delight, because he nourishes on the screen the swashbuckling idealism of nations for extravagant heroics, without being obliged to look at himself do it. But your literary liar must read his own copy over and over, grow sicker and sicker of how dull and meanly good it is. He must listen while others praise it when he knows by the witness of his own spirit what rot it is. How much worse for him it must be, then, when a million husky men who have been libeled in it make a very public business of tearing it up.

We all have our faults and frailties, but over and above that, every man and nearly every woman has his own peculiar sin, the one surnamed 'Besetting Sin,' a pleasant companion; not noble, but natural. Therefore, he acquires an affection for it that he rarely feels for his best virtue. He would rather pluck out the eye of that virtue, cut off its right hand, than to divorce himself from that sin. How mad, bad, and foolish, then, for Mr. Lewis to gather up everybody's besetting sins and make hideously ugly romances of them! Personally I have never had such anguishing fame as he complains of, but I have always had the godly wit to handle besetting sins tenderly, knowing that while I am not a Babbitt weeding a wide row on the sly, I am a vehement old

termagant in the open, with not as much Christian charity as I should have for that certain meanness of the mind which some of the realists show in their efforts to be realists. There is all the beauty we have in realism. Why make human character abominable by deleting the loveliness of it? The reason I do not expect to be condemned for the wrath I show towards these realists, rationalists, and primitives is that I am obliged to do so in defense of my poor old fellow man. Righteous wrath may be the hot end of a virtue.

All this fussing I did with my pen on the eighth day of the time I spent in this hospital, with nothing really to complain of but the sun, moon, and stars, and of the world in general as the morning paper published news of it. There must have been much good and inspiring news in this same paper, but I was in that mood a woman is always in when she kicks the cat, though the cat may not be at fault — irritable on general principles.

Ill-health, with the fact that I was spending more time in bed than in traveling, was not the explanation of my mental indisposition, for I still clung valiantly to the idea that I was only resting 'between trains,' so to speak, and would get up presently and go ahead, which was precisely what I did.

But this was my trouble. After years of quietness and the willful effort to work out my own peace in that narrow Valley between the high hills at home, where all things, including the people, are much as they have been for the last hundred years, I had started off on a Happy Pilgrimage with all my banners flying, only to run into a world I did not know. It did not belong to me. I had had no part in the making of it. I was as much astonished as some little god might have been if he had been taking a whiff around one morning and

discovered a planet that did not belong to his flock of stars. A lively, gallant, green little world, diurnal and urnal in its orbit as usual, but kicking up its own dust in his firmament, living and achieving tremendously without reference to what he considered the morals and duties of a good little planet of his own design. Just so the world I had helped to make was gone. The faith and laws I had kept were gone with it. Yet this amazing new one was doing confoundingly well by itself, building and building, widening, accomplishing what any Old or New Testament writer would have set down as 'miracles.' Not only that, it was gallivanting around most frivolously, having a good time, enjoying its flesh and substance, cashing in, as I saw it, on all that hard work we had done, the laws we had kept, the virtues we had achieved, simply by brushing away the standards we had set up for the preservation of this immortal estate. And it was of no use to sidestep the obvious facts by predicting, in a fit of spleen, the destruction of this new world, because the thing seemed firmly established on a mortal and strictly commercial basis.

I tell you, my dear friends, I was upset and grieved to think what we had missed in that world of a generation ago if this one worked. And it seems to be going smoothly and swiftly without much prayer reference to the Providence to whom we looked perpetually for strength and guidance. How could people labor so fiercely if they looked for no reward beyond this life, only old age and death at last in this one? How could they do the things that we knew were wrong without ever feeling conscience-stricken? — having given Sin the new name of 'Consequences' and having substi-

tuted the theory of physical hygiene for chastity. Would these rational laws of health actually take the place of the Ten Commandments? Could a civilization go on developing steadily in power, wisdom, and strength if the bonds of marriage were less binding than an ordinary business contract, if nothing remained upon which to found the sanctities of the home? What would become of property under these conditions? Would they at last found a sort of National Alimony Fund, as they have put in compensation laws to insure disabled laborers, and what would become of those most illusive but most important property investments they were making in the future — Children? Was it possible for schools to take the place of parents in the life and training of children?

I once wrote an article on 'The Passing of Parents,' but nobody would publish it. I suppose the idea was to keep the secret as long as possible about the resignation of mothers and fathers from their position as parents. But no one who observes the adolescents of this country *en masse* can believe their fathers and mothers love and cherish and dutifully chasten them as we brought up our children.

But I must be wrong about this. I see these brilliant youngsters running amuck as far as they please without fear and without reproach, they then go ahead running this new world at high speed, taking big jobs and doing them well, taking a husband, taking a divorce from him, with or without alimony, hiring a nurse to bring up their children, and going ahead successfully with the grand career they have chosen in the world of art or business. Fathers have always done that, but never mothers in the world where I was born.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE SPRING ROAD LEADING UP TO THE HOUSE, IN THE VALLEY

Women are demanding an even break with the men everywhere and they are getting it. There has been an amazing shifting in the scale of values which I cannot compute. In the end a better balance will be made, but, being old and a trifle out of date, I do tremble for what we may lose before we gain by the right adjustment. My sympathies are all with the women, having been one for a long time and knowing how poorly we have fared for ages, but I wish they would go slower than they are going during this transition period.

I missed so many of the types of men and women I used to know in this flashing, competent new world. I met some able churchwomen, some important women in the political world, but not one who felt like a perfect lady. I was never able to make that grade myself, but I have always entertained a respectful admiration for her. There was another at whom I used to grin secretly, but now I could fall upon her bosom if I could find one. She had a sterilized mind. She would use only the weakest, most innocent words. If she said a person was 'naughty,' she meant that he was a liar and a thief. This was the way of her type of avoiding the word-spatter of evil wisdom, but as I look back now it seems to me that they were all married, happily married at that. I never heard of one whose husband treated her unkindly. No matter what sort of man he was, she managed to keep her frail fingers on the scruff of his neck. She is obsolete now. The noblest Roman of them all cannot do that to a modern husband.

A middle-aged woman should be able to contemplate any man simply as a component part of nature which is no longer essential to her happiness. Still, I retain a lively interest in men. They are the only grown people

who never grow up. That characteristic appeals to the normal woman the wiser she grows in her own years. My own feeling is that there is something witty in the mind of God who fashioned them variously enough, so that they could become heroes or villains, wise men or fools, build a world or tear it down, but no matter, the last one of them retains this secret element of childishness which all women recognize. And this I suppose accounts for the wit of the Almighty. The grander or worse they are, the more does that childishness in them appeal to woman. In his last ditch a man has only to look up into her maternal face with that whimper in his eye and she will drag him out, put a ring on his finger, and kill her fatted calf for him, just to hear him talk so splendidly of remorse and repentance. She never can learn that vocative remorse in a man is a kind of momentary eloquence he recites, and that a man who really repents would never in this world mention to her the thing he had repented of.

Having devoted so much thought to men, having studied them till I thought I knew all a woman is likely even to infer about them, because we never can know much, my amazement can be more easily imagined than told when I discovered that the men of this new world were strangers to me, with only a few of the old adjectives clinging despairingly to them. They were in a reverse state of the masculine. They have been whipped out so far as women are concerned, and are taking a gratifying rest from their responsibilities to her, moral and otherwise. If she wants to earn her own living, let her do it, and earn his also. If she wants to go her own gait, let her go, and the devil take the hindmost. She is no longer his affair. If she wants to marry

him, let her say so; he would as lief as not marry, since it is easy merely to let her get a divorce also. If there is anything to be said about her, he will say it. He is no longer the protector of her good name. Let her protect it herself if she can. All is unfair in love and war. And they have both love and war between them; but not on the old romantic basis, now on the grounds of equality — where in truth and nature there never can be equality.

I am speaking now of young men as I saw them in action. My impression was that they show a reserve amounting to a laudable anxiety not to compromise themselves by allowing the prevailing girl to take them too far to turn back from the road to matrimony. I could not make out whether it was the doubt they entertained about supporting a family, or the much more expensive risk of alimony which every marriage now at least predicates. Anyway, it seemed to me the rising young man in his effort to concentrate in his work and economize is handicapped by the interruptions of the brave young girl of to-day. If she wants him for any reason at all, she will go after him and she usually fetches him out if he has no boss to protect him during business hours.

I must say he is a brilliant and competent youngster, quite equal to making his world go round. No one need fear that he will not keep his ships on all the seas, his factories running night and day, his production equal to the markets' demands in the farthest ports of the world; but his mind and manners are strange to me. Mentally speaking, his bottom is on top. He says what men used not to say. He flashes too much, with nothing left after the flash. I will not go so far as to say

he is not a gentleman, but I do doubt if he cares a thing about being one. He'd rather tear around actually or intellectually and be himself. That is always a dangerous and doubtful person to be, like taking your lid off and inviting just Nature to cut a caper.

Now, according to my mild way of thinking, it is not essential that a gentleman should be bright. On the contrary, scintillating wit is like having too much light in a room — it makes him garish. He loses his shadows, his noble obscurities, his dignity, the tone of time that breeding gives, which is so much more important than mere brilliance, which is also a sinful characteristic of brass. He should be a trifle dull when he speaks, but not silly. He does not need to sparkle. He could very well leave that to those who can only obtain recognition by their brain antics. He needs only to produce the impression of sincerity and good will. He is that friend of man who is never vulgarly intimate with man. Sounds like the obituary of an ass as I write it here, but I have known a good many such men in my time, and they lasted well. I do not remember ever having heard one of them called a fool. The best people like them, as we all like the qualities of quietness and rectitude in human nature.

It is possible that I stepped into the wrong set on this Happy Pilgrimage, and so failed to meet the higher types of men and women this new world is producing, but I honestly believed that I was moving as usual in the best circles to be found. The kind of gentleman I used to know seemed to me as rare in the younger set as that man among their elders who used to refer to his wife as his 'spouse' — something royal

and dignified about this title of 'spouse,' though it does suggest considerable amplitude of person in the wife who acquires it, which is probably the reason we never hear it now. Wives no less than maidens must be, and remain, slim. No woman wants such a fat title as 'spouse' bestowed or conferred upon her by her husband. What she wants to know of him, day by day, is if he thinks she is growing 'thinner.'

If you are a lover of words, it is interesting to observe how some of them acquire visibility, so to speak, and reputations for themselves in the various walks of life; how a foolish word will suddenly appear and become the lip fashion of the moment, then disappear like any other fad of fashion.

When good men or great ones die, we raise monuments to their memory. I have been tempted to write an obituary of certain fine old words that have almost passed away in this light-tongued, vocative new world. Instead of calling a man 'honorable,' they say he is a 'good sport'; even though he has never played a game of golf or tennis, never twirled a ball, he is clipped down to the terms used on the sporting page because this contains the literature of current idealism.

The English writers spell that great word 'honor' better than we do. They put it all in — 'honour.' That 'u'! — it is golden, like the nimbus about a star in a murky night. The word needs it to complete its effulgence. I never hear it spoken respectfully without thinking of brightness, a sword, some sort of glowing decoration.

Terms such as 'honor,' 'courage,' 'noble,' are great favorites with me, especially when I am revealing ideals of myself. The chief reason for this, of course,

is that I have no real talent for the attributes they describe, and have always craved them, endeavored to shine morally with the luster they impart to one's character.

I have often wondered how other men and women feel about the personal use of these terms. Maybe it is not wise to tell. Phariseeism is one of the sincerest natural qualities we have. I do not suppose any nobleman would care to dwell upon the fact that his nobility is not real, merely a title he inherited from a remote ancestor who earned it. My own belief is that like fine garments we all get these attributes at great expense, and wear them on the outside of what we really are and ever shall be, in order to appear well to ourselves and to others, as we wear clothes for the sake of decency. The naked mind of man is a fearful thing and ought not to be exposed. I have labored all my life to own honor, courage, a noble carriage, morally speaking. I have done and done, suffered and sacrificed, to that end, but to this day I do not feel really and incontestably virtuous. I am constantly humiliated privately with the most damnable suspicions as to whether I might have committed the same dastardly deed some one else has committed if I had been subjected to the same conditions and temptations and had not on my mind this vanity for wearing splendid raiment.

One of the things that disturbs me about this new world is the immodesty of its mind. They say it is so because they are living in a truthful age. Well, then, there is virtue in lying! The frightful candor they show, for example, about love is disgraceful, and only proves that they have found out at last what the lower animals have known all the time about love. But these

creatures have been provided by nature with the delicacy of dumbness. They cannot degrade each other by a warfare discussion of their instincts. Language has always seemed to me a suspicious circumstance in the evolution of mankind. It has occurred to me that men bit into some more forbidden fruit to obtain it. Still, since we have the power of speech, I do not think any man or woman should exercise it who is not enough of an idealist to have discovered that sex and soul are the most sacred endowments we have, and that both are equally entitled to reverence. From them all great thinking and every noble action springs. In comparison the vices we have acquired through these sources are negligible.

It is no use to go on complaining along this line, but it does seem to me some words have come into literary repute that indicate decadence or that should have remained in our strictly private vocabulary. And the best writers are using them — what do 'posh,' 'tosh,' and 'swash' mean? Galsworthy uses them according to the exigencies of euphony to define 'sentiment' — a great man of letters coining, not words, but elementary hissing noises of one syllable to convey his meaning. Sounds bad to me. Anne Douglas Sedgwick writes about 'clots' of color in her delightful novel 'The Little French Girl,' and I think the same kind of 'clots' appeared in two other novels about that time. Is it not enough to have Futurists and Cubists daub canvas with lurid smears and 'clots' of color to indicate a 'Headless Warrior,' without having literary artists choose a word with such a bloody reputation to describe a vase of marigolds?

The word 'thighs' has also come into sudden popu-

larity with writers of vigorous fiction. The time was when one would scarcely mention the human 'leg' rashly in fiction. But now Coningsby Dawson writes boisterously about the thighs of his men. George Agnew Chamberlain seems to have been obsessed by those of his hero. The idea conveyed was: this is no fictitious character; he is a real and terrible man or he would not have thighs! And Ben Ames Williams constantly refers to his own 'thighs' in his tramping, camping stories, with the scenes laid around 'Fraternity.' Zane Grey, the author of more blood-stained fiction than any other writer in this country, would not think of writing such a word into his copy. He uses the gun to produce the effect of vigorous fiction. It is not so humane, but his murders are less shocking to my prudish old sensibilities than having my attention so frequently called to just the thighs of the dangerous man or the terribly strong man in the tale. Maybe this is due to a streak of vulgarity in my mind and I ought to be ashamed of it. Still, I remain thankful that no lady novelist has yet painted in the 'second joints' of her hero.

I had spent three weeks in the hospital and my condition was much improved. But I suffered a sort of relapse into the old impatience to be up and on my way. A hospital, I reflected, was a place for sick people who expected to get well, but since I had no such expectations, why waste more precious time there? This was a sensible view to take and very agreeable to me. I had no family or friends to oppose it in that distant land. For this I was thankful, having always found the dearest of families and the most devoted friends stumbling

blocks when the time came for me to make an arbitrary recovery of my health.

I was not yet equal to the journey I planned to San Francisco, and went to the Ambassador to gain strength for this next adventure.

IX

I WAS right about going to the Ambassador. A fashionable hotel is the place where the family life of the public goes on gayly, elegantly, commercially, secretly, and in every other way. I must have appeared as strangely out of place there as the portrait of a female ancestor, done with an awful veracity in crayon, would look hung upon the walls of a very fine public-house. I have seen such likenesses of former men and women in even stranger places, and they always give the impression of being more observant than, say, one of those far more ornamental 'Portraits of a Lady' painted by a master. These lovely dames frequently appear to ignore what is going on with a loftier, sweeter look. But your crayon-featured grandmother never ceases to regard you with a personal stare of implacable candor. No art has softened the weathered sternness of her countenance, or the accusatory 'thou-art-the-man' look in her coal-black crayon eyes, though she may have been dead before you were born and had gentle blue eyes in real life.

I do hope I did not appear to be so forbidding as this, for I spent some of the happiest days of my Pilgrimage in this hotel. I had a certain experience there which was entirely new to me and very gratifying. I awoke on the morning of perhaps the third day to find myself literally and personally famous. What I mean is that I enjoyed all the thrills and some of the adulation of being a popular writer for the first time in my life.

This is almost a derogatory statement for the author

of twenty-odd novels and autobiographies to make, and calls for an explanation. It is really not so bad as it sounds.

I am gun-shy of the public. I have written so much truth about men and women without including the popular features of sex transgression that I know I do not deserve to be popular as authors of fiction frequently are. I do not think I am such a 'bad actor' when it comes to interpreting the human heart, having always put in the tender, mitigating circumstances along with my other interpretations. Still, I know I have betrayed the confidences of a great many men and women whom I have never actually seen or known. In no other way can I account for the desire I have to take to my heels every time I do it again. I live in the strictest retirement, feeling frequently the embarrassment of many men's consciences. You never see me prancing to the front on a rostrum before the public, waiting for the deafening cheers of the audience. The reason is, I think, that I have told something on every man and woman in it, and I am in grave doubt about whether they will feel like applauding me for doing so. Besides, I have never felt the need of this kind of stimulation, as, I suppose, one who has never tasted champagne does not crave it. It has always been enough for me to find more and more deeply hidden truths of the human heart and to set them to tune with the right words. I have been a 'forty-niner' at that business for more than twenty years. And in all this time I have never taken but one cowardly advantage as an author — I write what I know and believe as if both were sound truth, but I never, by subscribing to a 'clipping bureau,' give the public a chance to contra-

dict or reproach me! You may vent your spleen, but if the offender does not know you are doing it, never sees your brilliant arraignment of him, he is not affected by your accusations, and his vision is not darkened by your adverse opinion. He can go on seeing clearly what you really are below your own speech-line of visibility, and copying it into his next book under the *nom-de-plume* of his little personal pronoun as usual.

This is the reason why I never read what critics say of my work. If it is appreciative, God will bless them; even if it is not, I doubt if He will damn one of them for revealing a little self-consciousness in his review. My loftier business is to give them the same liberties I take and to avoid the shooting. Thus, by exercising discretion, I retain the valor to go on interpreting and explaining why they do it. 'Vain is wisdom if a man be not wise for himself.'

I do not always escape, to be sure. A generous stranger sometimes sends me an item of bitter news about myself clipped from his morning paper. Lately a remark I made, in what I supposed to be a private conversation, praising men for the strides they are making in modesty and shyness, was published as a complaint. I hoped the thing would pass unnoticed. But there is always somebody with a net spread for bad news about you. This morning, while I was engaged in copying entrancing revelations of the many men and women stored in my heart, the mail came in, bringing a letter from a man enclosing a clipping from his morning paper. He explained that it had been written by one of the fiercer maidens of mature years. This is what the old girl said about me:

What is more natural than for a woman, who is wanting

['wanting' is the word she uses, my dears! Stronger than if she had said correctly 'lacking'!] in what we popularly speak of as 'sex appeal,' to reach the conclusion that men refrain from courting her because they are too shy.

She reveals her own condition, not mine, in her conclusion. One can scarcely write well without doing so, and she writes very well indeed. But, I ask you, why give way to the oldest, most pathetic inferiority complex women suffer by desiring attention from men when I no longer need it? I was sufficiently attractive to have been happily married for probably twenty years by the time I was the age she is now — am still, in consciousness, though my husband has been dead for many years. The idea of making a romantic mendicant of one's self after the age of romance has passed does not appeal to my sense of dignity.

But the point to which I wish to draw your particular attention is that this clipping flew up out of the morning mail into my face while I sweetly tuned to writing that paragraph of revelations I mentioned a while ago. I was obliged to lie back on my pillows, very hot and indignant with this cross-current of reflections I have just set down in rebuttal to her conclusion. By the same token I lost the happier mood of writing. Multiply this clipping by any number that might be sent in from a clipping bureau and you can imagine how difficult it might be for me to keep the levels and altitudes of my own thoughts; mentally, at least, I should spend half of my time killing snakes. The reviewers who praised my work would not pay the difference, for it is censure, not praise, which makes deepest impression on us. Very few writers can endure much of it without being chastened into trimming down

what they really believe, to please their critics instead of their readers. If a reader does not like what you have written, he backbites you to the editor, but if he is particularly pleased, he writes to you personally, God bless him! But of every thousand letters an author receives probably three will be fault-finding. And in my case they are anonymous unless he happens to be a grammarian with no more than a mechanical use of words. Then he proudly signs his name. It is a mystery to me how these merely word-parsing people can be so vain of their mental limitations. Lately a young man sent me two closely written type-written pages calling attention to the many grammatical errors I had made in my last book, two hundred in all. I forgave him, knowing how mischievously contentious I am about the naked words other writers use, however grammatically. But if that young man ever achieves a literary career it will be a frightfully dull one.

This is the way I feel toward grammarians and the kind of cowardly insurance I have always carried against critics who publish opinions of my work. I had never dared to face the numerous adversities attached to my reputation as a writer, until that morning at the Ambassador when a more personal, sweeter, kinder fame than I had ever known began calling me on the telephone and sending up their cards. Real men and women — fifty of them in one day! — wished to speak to me, or to see me, because I had written this book or that one. I was entranced, and frightened half out of my wits. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before, and since it is not likely to happen again, I may be pardoned for making a hand-clapping note of it here. You should bear with me, seeing how hard I had

worked for years, always fearing your judgments, putting a bold face on that, but keeping out of sight and hearing, hiding my face, writing it out for you a trifle homelier than it really is, hoping thereby to win a little charity, always anxious lest I should never win your regard. Then to be suddenly overwhelmed with so much love and praise, to experience for a few days the grand sensation of being a popular author! — How, I asked myself, could Sinclair Lewis speak so contemptuously of such appreciation? It literally made me weak with piety and gratitude to God, which was not in accord with my rational views about Providence. But why be rational all the time, when even the materialist is not that much reduced to being just himself? I prefer being spiritual beyond the limits of my mortal faculties now and then, knowing that when all is said and done the Presbyterians are right and that 'the chief end of man is to glorify God.' I never am excessively happy without taking a little spell of glorifying my Maker.

For days I was too fearful to receive these visitors, having been long committed to the belief that authors are disillusioning in their personal effects upon their readers.

At last one afternoon I made a faintly smiling toilet and started downstairs to meet some of these dear importunate people.

When I came through the door of my room there was a very old man standing just outside. He was short and broad, with snow-white hair and beard, weather-beaten countenance, seafaring eyes, fadeless blue and very keen. His clothes were rough, collar open at the neck showing a brown breast covered with that same beard.

He said he had been waiting for me a long time. He was a tent-maker, he explained, much as if he had said, 'I am Peter, who lives down here by the sea.' He did not tell me his name, the inference being that he was just himself under any name. He may have been crazy for all I know. If so, it was a sort of wise, gentle madness. I did not think to wonder until afterward how he got up there unannounced.

We walked together down the long corridor to the elevator — no compliments. He went on speaking kindly with soft husky tenderness to me about what I had been, and what I had done, as a father speaks to his son who has made an honorable record in living. When we reached the lobby where those other people were waiting, he blessed me with a few more gravely praising words and went his way. I had never heard of him and did not see him again, but I shall never forget the compelling majesty of his presence. Don't tell me that plain people are not gifted sometimes with a quality and a dignity which grander people never attain! They know you in a way no one else does, and, without making a fuss about it, they can be the very bread and wine of love to you when you need it.

I was obliged still to spend my mornings in bed. On one of these mornings a young woman got by the bellboys and came in. She was tall, very slim. Coal-black hair, slightly waved as Nature makes it, and bobbed. She had a sad little mouth, indicating that she no longer used it much in conversation. Something had happened to silence her, I inferred. Still she kept a curious gleam of humor in her wide gray eyes. She was dark, very pale, and strangely beautiful, like one line of a lovely old ballad, the rest of which you cannot re-

call — something obscure about her loveliness. She wore a blue dimity frock with tiny white dots in it, frosted on the edges with narrow white lace, a touch of rose and green embroidery on it somewhere, probably the pocket, but very faint stuff, as if she did not care now to bloom much.

During the whole time I knew her I never saw her wear a hat, but she frequently carried a curious straw thing hung by the strings over her arm, which she must have got out of one of the earlier English romances. I thought she might be anywhere in her twenties, and could be thirty, and undoubtedly married for better or worse — that type.

She wished me good-morning and looked around for a chair, drew it close beside the bed, sat down, and said that I did not know her — which was the truth. I had no idea even after she gave me her name — a pretty wild one that had been picked like a rose for her from one of the brighter hedgerows of nomenclature, and it was now joined to a plain-husband-sounding one, which some women wear like a stone hung around their necks.

She failed to surprise me only because I had been in the West for six months and had learned that no matter what their former state or antecedents may be, they escape into a sort of freedom from the tyranny of conventions. They can do the worst things and the best with a *verve* and charm we know nothing about. They have all been born again.

She had her sewing-bag with her, and pulled out a very small child's dress and began to put the hem in it with the needle-and-thread-whipping grace fair ladies have. The inference was that she had come to spend

the morning with a sick friend, but had no time to lose. She assumed me, you understand, and I lay back with supine satisfaction, watching her do it, not realizing at the time that she had already taken out naturalization papers in her affections for me, and that I was now a pensioner upon her strictly maternal bounty. Such was actually the case. From that time so long as I was in California I could never get beyond her love and care. She knew many pleasant people who were distinguished one way and another, not as we know such men and women, but with the sound peaceful intimacy of affection which she now incontinently bestowed upon me. What I mean is that she was the most universally beloved woman I have ever known, without being obliged to finance herself in manners or clothes — generally supposed to be essential to the high parts and fine parts she was frequently called upon to play socially and personally.

In the course of the conversation which followed that morning she revealed the fact that she was the mother of five children, all of them established in motion pictures. The baby, she explained mildly, had been 'in pictures' since she was ten months old. Even at that, I fell into a sort of mathematical frenzy trying to compute the age of this amazing woman who looked still like the blessed Damosel of a girl. It turned out that she did all of her own work, including the sewing, that she spent hours every day at the Pickford studio, where her two small girls had parts in Mary Pickford's 'Sparrows,' which was then in process of being filmed, that she taught her children French and manners and music and staged a dance for them every evening, and that she was a space writer on one of the daily papers

besides being on the staff of a gallant little California magazine. If she had any faults, I saw no signs of them, and she had only one vanity, which was superlative — her children. She always went about armed with photographs of these youngsters, not in singles or even doubles, but as they appeared in the scenes of various famous motion-picture dramas and comedies. She had no money, due to the circumstance that she went on paying the enormous expenses of this talented and growing family. But she entertained frequently and fearlessly. Her guests would be invariably the young ravens she had chosen for the miracle of providential feeding that evening. The marvel of these affairs can be better illustrated than described. In the first place you could come, whether you were invited or not, if you were a hungry young artist on your uppers, and even if you were a very distinguished person, whether you knew for certain that this hostess would be giving a dinner that evening or not. You could be as sure of food in any case as she was herself, and precisely the same kind. The chief thing was that you could be sure of a mild, sweet welcome, good music, and the dancing of those truly amazing children, who had somehow been trained to remain silent if it turned out to be conversation instead of a concert.

One evening I was invited to dine, as I inferred, *en famille*. When I arrived it was at a plain little house on an out-of-the-way street, the house scrappily furnished with magnificent old heirlooms of one sort and another sticking up scornfully in bare corners. From the time I arrived until dinner was served, cars roared up, fine ladies and fine gentlemen *de luxe*, bearing burdens which they rushed in through the back door, where-

upon they disappeared as milkmen and caterers always do. Presently Carrie Jacobs Bond arrived bearing a basket of fruits and jellies. After that various people of note dropped in, having heard, as they explained, that Wynona was giving a dinner that night. Some of them claimed that it was by the merest accident that they had come.

There were not nearly enough places at the table. This made no difference. They perched here and there and dined anyhow. The food was varied and sumptuous. And I discovered that the expensive courses had been furnished by neighbors and friends in other parts of the city. I was assured by one of her friends that this always happened when so much as a rumor took wing that Wynona was giving a dinner that evening. If the rumor proved to be false for the moment, when the viands began to pile in she had only to call over the telephone, announce that she was entertaining friends, and at once all the friends who could spare themselves from pressing duties or pleasures arrived.

This woman is a notable example of the charm and hospitality of the West.

I am still at a loss to account for her amazing power to achieve so much goodness and loveliness in addition to a life of what we would call drudgery, but her hospitality is very remarkable on account of its romantic derivations. Hospitality is not so much a virtue as it is an instinct in the West. If some one catches sight of you on the highways or even the byways she is liable to compel you to come in. The fact that she does her own work never figures in her calculations. She may be the wife of a millionaire who had been out driving all the afternoon, still if she gets a glimpse of you she

may ask you to drive with her. If so, you had better accept the invitation. You are sure to find a table plentifully supplied with sumptuous food, well prepared and beautifully served by her or her belle of a daughter, with practically no interruption in the table conversation, no matter now abstruse that is. One afternoon I was going up in the elevator in a country town hotel with a couple who were stopping there. Joseph Jefferson, Jr., was playing at the theatre that night, and was also stopping at this hotel. They were giving a little dinner upstairs for him and would I come in? It was then ten minutes before this dinner would be served! — As casually as that are they liable to invite you to meet a touring Queen, or a world-wide celebrity. I did not think much of Jefferson as a guest. He resembles his illustrious father to a remarkable degree, but without the charm or presence of that great actor. He is a very old man and was accompanied by a cane instead of a dog, leaned heavily upon it, partook sparingly of the excellent food and insisted upon discussing the misery in his back. Otherwise that was a delightful evening, and nobody seemed to mind the groans of the guest of honor. It would not have surprised me at all if the host had given him a saucer of hot milk to drink. These people have the courage to do anything, however unconventional, whether it is something kind or something shrewdly unscrupulous in the way of putting over a high-Sierra deal in real estate.

The mind of the West is in a similar state to that of the planet Saturn — not yet congealed into form and firmness, surrounded still with the bright rings of theories and wonderments. The Westerners like to dabble in mysteries with the same ardor that children

explore fairy lore. They are always prepared to believe anything remarkable, and to make you believe it even if they do not, if you are the happy pilgrim in their midst. They like to discuss obscure subjects, not to appear intellectual, because they really are fantastically intellectual without affectation. They enjoy getting themselves picked to pieces by a psychopath just to find out whether there is anything in this sensational science of the mortal mind. They are perfectly capable of digging up some ancient effigy of a heathen god and setting it up for mesmeric contemplation — not worship, mind you. They are practically no good at worshiping anything but the Brobdingnagian scenery of their marvelous country, but they want to find out how it feels to be mesmerized by a dingy little Buddha with the dust of a thousand years sticking to him.

One afternoon some friends took me out to see a great estate and the temple of a house with which it was capitalized, so to speak. The mistress was a middle-aged widow who had rescued it from bankruptcy by her own financial shrewdness after the death of her husband. To me she appeared to be a placid, gray-haired woman sinking down softly and shapelessly in her years. But neither Madam Blavatsky nor Mrs. Besant had anything on her when it came to 'the voice of silence,' or making stars grow together in a strictly domestic relation, though they may appear very far apart in the heaven of heavens. The difference between her and these mystics, who specialize in only one creed of mysteries, is that she was sublimely catholic spiritually, without taking her Maker into her confidence. The house she lived in looked like any other from the outside, except that she had started at the

foot of a considerable mountain to build it and had gone so far up, story upon top of story, that when you entered it from the driveway you were already on the third floor of the thing.

I have seen many mansions on the inside and a few palaces, but nothing to compare with the wealth and splendor of this house. It was ceiled from top to bottom with magnificently carved teakwood: beams showing overhead twelve inches wide of this same wood: all imported from Asia and India; a green forest of exotic trees outside the fourth-floor windows, which reached across that end of the room, with curtains of beads, clear and emerald, hanging within like April showers crystallized. Every floor represented the wealth, culture, and religion of some ancient country. The one devoted to India had Indian draperies, rugs, furniture, and innumerable Indian gods elevated at convenient places of worship. Another floor devoted to Asia was filled with similar objects, splendors, and over all the quietness of a temple.

On top of the house she had an observatory devoted to the stars. Here her imagination failed her and it was not furnished at all. She went there in the evening to think out these stars, and had done so by her own account. For example, she had discovered by simply referring to the signs of the Zodiac that we were now on embarrassing moral terms with a certain distant star, the surname of which I forget, because the earth was passing through the eleventh sign of the Zodiac, called 'Aquarius.' Which marked some kind of bad waterline in human conduct. So soon as we were out of the snare of Aquarius, our manners and morals would improve.

She read all the rugs upon the various floors, which

embarrassed me as it would to be treading blasphemously upon heathen scriptures woven by the pious fingers of thousands of women. One that she called the 'Connubial' rug impressed me on account of its beauty and simplicity, but very strange to be connubial, thick and splendid in texture, blue peonies on a tawny background, and ornamented in the corners with blue figures, half peonies and half baboon. I do not know how the other members of our party felt about this, but I felt very queer, as if the imagination of heathens had done something to my womanly pride.

Now and then we must halt before one of her favorite Buddhas and sink into contemplation. I recall one in particular, either because she thought he was more potent than the rest or because he seemed to me to wear the masculine counterpart of the famous Mona Lisa smile upon his graven bronze features.

There was no room in this house devoted to the arts or scriptural imagery of the Holy Land, which indicates that subconsciously this woman had too much instinctive reverence for the Christian religion to mix it with this hodgepodge of heathen gods and cults. But while admiring a cabinet filled with lovely pieces of porcelain and glass I caught sight of what I supposed to be the figure of the Virgin Mary nursing the infant Jesus: a marvelous thing in white glass, pure and sweet. I have always entertained a kind of touching reverence for the memory of the Virgin Mary, without feeling that I commit a breach of reverence for her Divine Son, in whose divinity I do firmly believe. So I was standing before the lovely image, giving myself permission to remember and adore it privately in this strange place, when that amazing woman passed by

and informed me that the thing was meant to be the figure of a heathen goddess, much older than the Virgin Mary, who sat upon the banks of the river Nile! Everything had to do with water. I asked my God to pardon me, and resolved to slam my spiritual faculties out of the back door until I could escape from this museum of heathen deities. When at last we did get out, the very gills of my soul seemed affected. What I mean is that I am pathetically impressionable through my imagination and that water sign of the Zodiac which dominated this strange woman's mysticism was near to liquefying the heavens for me. I felt fishy, spiritually speaking.

However it may be with others, for me it would be as dangerous to study heathen religions and prance around heathen gods as it would be to choose my human companions from among powerful, but doubtful people. Therefore, I am bound to conclude that it is a dangerous folly to dabble in the sorcery of heathen religions. This is something many people of the West do not know. So far from being rationalists or materialists in this matter, they are lightly romantic. They have a questing faith that will try out any kind of religion. They are not pagans, but they have some strangely pagan instincts when it comes to their spiritual relaxations. In no other way can we account for the furor that went on constantly at this time in the famous Angelus Temple in Los Angeles. It is no use to claim that only ignorant people went there. The wise and the cultured also attended. I have had some experience in revival orgies in my circuit-rider days and I am bound to conclude that they were drawn to that place by the inebriating influences which emanated from it,

as pagans used to make a hot time in the old town of Rome when they staged a pious festival in honor of the gods. I will warrant that even yet, when the charlatanry made of true religion in that place has been so frightfully exposed, this temple is still filled with men and women seeking intoxication of their emotions.

One thing is certain, we shall crave some kind of exaltation as we aspire blindly toward the highest so long as men and women exist. They will have it through beverages, drugs, jazz, political rallies, revolutions, wars, or the misuse of their spiritual faculties in religious excitement. As for me, I prefer to get mine through great poetry, great music, eloquence, the contemplation of heroic deeds, never by prostituting my faith in God to obtain this purely sensuous and physical gratification. We are bound to God by faith and certain principles in living, not by emotional excitement, which in the very nature of things must be brief, when sobriety leaves us on the dead level of what we were before we shouted ourselves drunk the night before. These spiritual fakers choose religion for their method because the scenes of religion are already in the minds of men. They have only to pervert the meaning of it by hypnotism in order to reap vast harvests of gold, fame, notoriety, and indulge their own besotted instincts.

This is the great handicap in religious development, entailed upon us by those fine elder evangelists, who dealt much more fiercely and honestly than these modern charlatans do, but with a different, simpler breed of men. But always martyrdom, the Cross of Christ, were the evidences and emblems of piety and redemption. They missed their cue, the right sense of

God, who has made so great a preparation for our happiness and prosperity. An honest mind, a clean heart, peace and the power to live cheerfully by faith through every adversity should be the heroine marks of the Christian character; not so much puerile humility as we used to show to the world, not nearly so much impudence as these moderns show to the Almighty, whose back is never turned to our performances.

The more I see of people, East or West, in this new world, the more does the impression deepen in my mind that they have no fixed premise to start from or to return to as exalted spiritual beings, getting a lesson in faith by living in the flesh, because they do not believe they are any such beings. They may be right about emancipating themselves from the terrifically commanding idea of Providence, and from what we called the Eternal Order of things, in favor of their own providences and short-termed orders; but if they are wrong, they are heading straight toward destruction by their own hands — a catastrophe that has happened before on this earth; more than once it has been wiped clean of man and all his works. He did not even leave so many bones behind him as other animals have done that perished then. If it happens again, I do not suppose there is any time-keeper in Eternity who will so much as glance at the clock to note the time of day when the disaster was finished. It will be in that wideness an incident of relatively little importance, like brief bad news items from other districts of this universe. Besides, whatever may be said of these distant planets, there is a spiritual element breathed long ago into the dust of this one. Another race of men will spring from it presently with better judgments of values, nobler

powers of mind and body. Every time we come again we are abler, as Adam was a grand improvement on those original merely male and female humans who antedated him, according to the record in Genesis.

As for me, my imagination quails before this next interim of awful silence. I do not care to be mixed up with such a tragedy, even in the ancient dust of my grave. I am for holding fast to God, the original premise of all things. If I go wrong, then it is much simpler to turn back home in Him and start all over again, sanctified and freshened for the journey, than it is to wander around frivolously at loose ends, as I see men and women doing now. Maybe they have always done it, but not with the golden calf of their own intellects to worship. No one can complain of me about this, except perhaps the theologians and the hypocrites, and they only because I have worked out a little homemade creed of my own, easier to let out or tighten up than patented formulas of faith they impose upon their various congregations to the end that they may waste their spiritual substance in contradicting and contending with one another over the doctrines in these formulas. And naturally the materialists will be amused, if they take any notice at all of me, because I am so short on logic and consistency, artlessly claiming the Providence, either personal or impersonal, according to the kind I need on that page to convey my thought. But, I ask you, did ever you see any man who was logical and consistent in his thinking and living? If so, you did not see him when he did not know you were observing him. I may be a fool, but not that kind. I can at least rise upon the wings of my foolishness, which is something no materialist can do. He is committed in

consciousness by his philosophy to sharing the same fate with the lowest animals. Whatever mine may be, I have no such diminishing consciousness, which gives me a tremendous advantage over him, if you know what I mean.

It is never normal to keep a diary even of your thoughts, much less your feelings. Only sedentary people do it, who have grown listlessly self-conscious, mentally or physically, through extraordinary circumstances or illness. For years I have written little sketch-books of the thoughts and visions that come to me, because I have lived in a remote place with practically no companionship except that of my own mind and imagination. These conditions were changed in the West, because of the fleeting companionships. In another way, however, they were intensified by long days of illness when my mind remained well and fairly active. Never before had I been confined to my bed except for brief periods. It was during my stay at The Ambassador that I seemed to be getting on my feet again. Not only that, but I was taken cheerfully and completely out of myself by those blessed invocations I received as a popular author, a strictly local demonstration, you understand, and precisely the same which every writer of any note at all receives in the West. I would not for a moment dwell, as some travelers do, upon the bragging conceit of these Westerners about their own fortunes, prospects, and attainments; naturally they do that. Not one of them can lift his eyes to his skyline, to the purple tops of his mountains, without becoming as vocative as a child about his country, his ocean, his past and his future, which include all

the inhabitants, scenery, and natural resources of that region. But to my mind their most lovable and enchanting characteristic is the generosity with which they recognize the faintest trace of a laurel on the stranger's brow, the largest of praise they are ready to bestow upon any person of talent, especially in the arts. As human beings they have a blithe climate, warm and sunny hearts. They are incapable of jealousy or indifference. They have a rare and sweetened quality of the mind which, even more than their natural climate, probably accounts for the fact that so many artists and writers, gifted people of one sort and another, take up their residence on the West Coast. They are all well nourished with praise. I was literally pudgy with it after they discovered me.

This accounts for the fact that I lost my sketch-book and did not record so much as a date in it while I was at The Ambassador, though I was frightfully depleted financially during this half-year period. I can only remember that I left for San Francisco early in August, with everybody expressing a cool sort of wonder that any one should care to go to San Francisco who had seen, felt, and partaken of the friendliness and hospitality of Los Angeles.

Geographically speaking, I know as well as the next one that part of the earth is south of the other part — South America in the Western Hemisphere, Africa in the Eastern Hemisphere. But not until I arrived on the West Coast of California did I know that there was any other conscious South except that embracing the Southern States, which for one brief period of blood, anguish, and ashes was drawn together under the name of the Confederacy. My amazement may be better

imagined than described in the scorpion tongue of words when I heard every man and woman who lived south of San Francisco refer to themselves as 'Southerners.' They might have been born above the frozen strata of New England Altruism, or in the Corn Belt of the Middle West. They might roll their *r*'s and use their noses as trombones of conversation, or they might retain that startling 'G Major' voice of the Middle West. Still they called themselves 'Southerners.' They liked to do it, as we of the real South hasten to mention our ancestors on the slightest provocation.

I was confused to the point of secret resentment at what seemed to me an irreverent transgression upon a sacred name. I was as much outraged as we all were in the South when all American soldiers in France during the Great War were called 'Yankees,' when undoubtedly the bravest minority of them were from the South. To my mind it was an atrocious injustice that they should have been called by the name of their fathers' enemies. But let that go. To the victors belong the spoils, even to the third generation. The circumstance which contributed most to my indignation and embarrassment was that the only other Southern woman in the Western community where I was then happened to be one whose conduct made her a libel on the precious name. And the excuse she gave for her performances was that she was a Southern girl, therefore so very ardent she simply could not behave with the frozen discretion of other ladies. I was in bed at the time and very short-winded, but when she came to call I gave her such a piece of my mind as she deserved. The most suspicious people I have ever met abroad are 'professional Southerners,' who traduce that good

name to cover their social defalcations or to explain the asinine strut they would never dare to assume among their own people.

I was finally reduced by a process of geographical rationalism to concede that there could be a South at the bottom of the western end of this continent, as there is a distinct one at the bottom of the eastern portion, much larger, of course, and older, having passed through three periods of civilization. But my concession was purely topographical. These people in Southern California have as many virtues as we have, much more wealth and energy. Any section might well envy them their courage. I believe they surpass us in hospitality, being more catholic about that than we are. But they are not 'Southerners' in the sense that we are. They have no such history or background. They are foregathered quite recently from all the ends of the earth, and their congealing consciousness makes them incredibly different from us.

The line of pride and prejudice that divides them from the people of Northern California runs, as near as I can make out, just outside the southern corporate limits of the city of San Francisco. It is invisible, but far more arbitrary than the Mason and Dixon line that still wavers faintly between our North and South. Their method of defining it is amusing. The people of Southern California are loudly boastful in their attitude toward their northern neighbors, openly competitive, slightly jealous in spite of the wind in their own sails. Meanwhile those of the North affect an attitude of silent contempt. You might live six months in San Francisco without suspecting their antagonism toward their southern neighbors unless you happened to notice

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CORRA HARRIS
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the curious silence that falls upon them if you mention any city, town, or circumstance connected with Lower California. But the effect is the same as if you had committed a breach of good manners. They endeavor politely to change the subject after leaving you a perceptible moment to dangle in this silence. It is similar to the coldness which frequently exists between the cousin branches of the same family. I do not suppose there is any intelligible explanation beyond the fact that one branch has taken on a calmer, more magnificent consciousness than the other, due to some misfortune or good fortune. My impression is that the pot of gold tends southward in California. So do the tourists, motion-picture industries, and other plum-bearing industries. Culture in the North is more serene, as if it had been there longer. And the fresh-water supply in that region is far greater, a dearth of which is apt to handicap the development of the southern portion. The earthquake that shook San Francisco down years ago was the severest known in North American history, but the New City they have built upon the ruins of the old one seems older and grander. Never were there firmer foundations laid against the internal jostles of the earth. This must have been a terrific drain on their finances and no doubt accounts in part for the coldness of their relations to the South, which swept ahead during this reconstruction period. The people are making a pride of their former misfortune, as is the way with great men and women. There are classical fronts and doorways in the new parts of the town that remind one of ancient doorways in the oldest parts of London, streets cobbled like the oldest streets in Madrid. Over all an air of permanence and dignity. There is no such

stretching and scuffling after art and culture as one feels, say, in Los Angeles. The idea is that here in this calm old wide-open town they have acquired the arts some time ago, all the excellences and culture successive breeding affords, and are now sitting restfully upon the same. They only give way to their Western emotions in splendid processions and tremendous entertainments. They have a passion for 'Jubilees.' They will give a Diamond Jubilee breakfast for the dropping of a hat and invite the world to be present. They make a fête day and resolve themselves into a procession in honor of anything from the Forty-Niners to the celebrating of the Navy, or the return of a hero from the air.

I was in San Francisco the day the city turned out to meet Captain John Rogers and the two young airmen just after they had been rescued from that Ancient Mariner's adventure, lost upon the seas around the Hawaiian Islands, which came so near costing them their lives. At three o'clock in the afternoon after a grand parade they finally arrived at the Saint Francis Hotel, where the women of the city were to entertain them. I saw Rogers come in walking briskly like a desperate hero hurrying through intolerable glories. He was accompanied by those two young airmen who had shared his perils. They were grinning sheepishly, each one wearing a diamond ring on his finger, that finger raised, sticking out as if it had some kind of glad bone felon on it. The city had presented Captain Rogers with a magnificent silver service, but to these youths they had given diamond rings. That is your West, North or South. They are bound by no loving-cup traditions. Their adulations are personal to you and original with them. They are capable of decorating you with a double

golden chain, studded with 'jubilee' diamonds, if you are a national hero, or if you have been a worthy citizen in straitened circumstances they may endow you with an estate, although the world never heard of you. I actually did hear of a poor young man who had given much of his time and service to the city of San Francisco without compensation and without political designs upon any public office. After fifteen years' labor as a silent patriot a number of rich men figured it out that the city was in debt to him. They subscribed sixty-five thousand dollars, bought a prosperous business, and presented it to him after underwriting his credit at the bank for a good many thousand more in case he should need additional funds to carry it on handsomely.

My impression of California is that widows without financial experience and other foolish people with money should not indulge in business there. If you invest a dollar, or a million, you cannot get it out again and go back home without sustaining considerable loss. What Californians get for ten minutes in a trade they keep forever. They are the world's ablest patriots at this business. But if you invest yourself as well as your fortune there, for better or for worse, stand by and do your part, like a good husband to California, your prosperity is better assured than usual in the business world.

When you are making a happy pilgrimage under difficulties, you are entitled to itemize your experiences in the record you make of the adventure without seeming egotistical except to that class of critics who would convict you of their own fault whether you are guilty

or not. Therefore, I go on to say that it will ever remain a source of gratification to me that I continued to be a mildly distinguished old person in this fine grave city without standing before an improvised counter in a bookstore to hold the surging crowd's attention by reading from my works while the flying clerks sold autographed copies of the same. This is a good business, but it would embarrass me at the end to stand at the Bar in the Last Day and be judged as the greengrocer of my books, because it will be dangerous enough to be marked down as merely the author of the things. Still, I did have a lively experience in a bookshop there. I had gone in with a young woman who is now by way of being a popular writer in the West, but who was distinguished then only privately for her wit and grace. When she disclosed my name to the manager of the shop, he exclaimed:

'What a coincidence! Your mother has just been in here asking for one of your books.'

For the briefest moment I was disconcerted by this news, since my mother passed away nearly forty years ago.

'Well, it is a coincidence. I had no idea she was in the city,' I replied. 'Are you sure?'

'Absolutely. She said so.'

'What age woman did she appear to be?' I asked.

He stared at me, growing more and more amazed with certain estimates of ageableness which he must have been making secretly.

'Why — er — she appeared to be about your age!' he exclaimed.

'She was fifteen years younger than I am now when she died,' I told him mildly.

His only reply was to cast a sort of wing-flapping eye gesture at his stock of books, indicating that some were gone forever. It turned out that my 'mother' had induced him to send the only copies of my books he had to her address on approval, a recklessly roguish old tourist passing through the city. We must take our praise where we find it in this world. I derived what satisfaction I could from the fact that somebody admired my works well enough to obtain them by assuming a fraudulent maternal relation to me. I hoped she was a handsome woman, but I did not have the heart to ask her poor victim how she looked.

So far as I know, I committed only one breach of wise manners in San Francisco. This was on the occasion when I was invited to address the Kiwanis Club at their weekly luncheon.

I sat beside Chester Roules at the table. He is made on the square, physically speaking, short in the legs and wide in the body with no more depth than a comfortably thin man. He has a broad, square-jawed, pink face, blue eyes, small but positive. He does not read you; he recites himself every time he looks at you — good honest copy too! His head is high, flat on top, and covered with a thick short thatch of silver and golden hair. He is a great editor, a famous student of international affairs, and one of the idols of the West. He is also a very nervous man. I am told that he has a habit of soothing himself with a pair of shears, cutting paper into strips as the old-fashioned woman used to calm her mind and spirit by knitting a sock. That day no shears or paper were provided for him, and he let off his excessive nervous energy by making a frequent hooking motion with his head, a forceful but not a

gentle gesture. As it happened, he invariably 'hooked' in my direction. I did not know why, never having heard of his paper-clipping habit. I was considerably wrought up myself nervously by the time the Episcopal minister seated on my right rose to introduce me.

What followed I do not know. In that pleasant, smiling silence I heard words issuing which must have been mine, but I doubt if they contained any meaning. Still, the five hundred men in the room applauded, as I suppose any group of men would applaud the only woman present if she rose to her feet and did no more than sneeze. I do not attribute my failure to the Jovean rocking of Mr. Roules's head at me, because I have made a failure on every similar occasion during the whole of my life, but I still believe I might have had some faint recollection of what I said to make this particular flash in the pan if I had only understood that he meant nothing personal by his fiercely crooked nods at me. Meanwhile, the moment I sank back into my own tittering silence that vast, broad man came to his feet and made the most brilliant address I have ever heard, still goring his audience with that head-hooking gesture!

The mistake in manners to which I have referred occurred later when nobody with the soul of wit should make one — after the meeting was over and I was being cordially received in a hand-shaking seance with the audience.

I had heard much of native sons in California. In every city or town I visited temples or halls have been erected to or for these sons. But I had never seen one beyond the age of schoolboys and college students whom I knew to be of this vintage. So, when my hosts

asked me that day if there was a single thing they could do to make me happier, which is their gracious custom toward the stranger within their gates, I said, 'Yes, I wish to meet a native son.'

What, the very idea of my not having met such a person! California was literally teeming with native sons, and so on and so forth, but not producing the article for which I called.

'Just show me one,' I insisted.

Followed such a milling of that crowd as I have never seen, quiet, but hurried movements in and out of the mass they made of themselves, as if they had been called upon to find and produce the proverbial needle in the haystack at a moment's notice.

I was conscious of having created an embarrassing situation. But what could I do? To save their very faces I was obliged to wait until they fetched him forth, even if they got him out of New England.

Finally they found one, *only* one out of five hundred, mind you. And I had the privilege of meeting a certified 'native son' at last — a fine-looking man, good face, but the fact that he had been born in the West had not done much toward adding that excessive cubit to his height we have somehow been led to expect. He was below medium height. My suspicion is that it is the shadows cast upon our imagination by this lofty land, crested with the tops of the high Sierras, and the exaggerated traditions of themselves and their country which these people promulgate that produces this expectation. Every tall man whom I located topographically came from New England, Kentucky, or some other State.

The youth of any country is its one divine product,

and is worthy of more inspirational suggestions than we of the older sections bestow upon it with all the expensive methods we employ to train it mentally and industrially. I have often thought that if we raised more monuments to great men and heroes in the remote country districts, besides those with which we garnish the parks and plazas of our cities, the effect upon the character of youth there would be more elevating than it can be in these great centers where there are so many competitive grandeurs and frivolous distractions to dull the perception of young people concerning that which is ennobling and heroic. Monuments are the prides and vanity which rich cities can afford, but far out in the dumb backwoods of our civilization they are some of the necessities which we rarely provide. Country boys and girls literally starve for such visible inspirations.

California is making no such mistake. Her young people are the obvious heirs of tremendous inspirations as well as incredible opportunities. That State is forever widening the wings of her glories to catch the eyes and fix the attention of posterity.

But, according to a theory based upon history, it is doubtful whether any country should keep up this racket about its 'native sons' beyond the third generation. Great-grandsons, in my opinion, should be exported. Natives never build a great civilization. They never even keep one in repair. They are absorbed by the very environments they have created. They become in time no more than one of the natural phenomena of that country, the listless victims of their own habits and circumstances, decadent by the processes of culture, wealth, or poverty, which they have patterned for themselves.

Pioneers are the only effective people. When a man ceases to be a frontiersman in his mind and purposes, whether in the material or spiritual world, he is no longer a man in the whole sense of that sublime word. He is a consequence produced by himself. Therefore, whatever the pacifists may say or hope, Man is the original name of War. He must fight and contend to change himself in order to survive.

That supernal dot of emerald green in the wide seas which we call England is now no more than the ancestral homestead of a great race of pioneers who have cut a highway of civilization around this earth, who have laid water mains through deserts, and who are still advancing, but at a slackened pace. However, the earliest inhabitants of the British Isles were savages. They had to be overrun, conquered, alloyed, smelted, and changed before they became these Anglo-Saxons who have belted a globe with their empires.

If natives could make a civilization, Columbus would have found one upon the edges of this continent whose shores he touched so vaguely. He did not because the North American Indians had already been natives so long that they had by that time become one of its natural features. They had sloughed off the history of their ages and could never tell from whom they had descended. Since we have begun to dig up the evidences of ancient civilizations here, we discover that the people who made them bear no resemblance to these Indians. The little clay faces turned up with many a spadeful of dirt in Yucatan bear the features of both the Nordic and Oriental races, but those of these Indians only resemble them as one human resembles another. Their features, skin, and bodies were pro-

duced by submission to natural conditions as a plant is slowly changed and made indigenous to any climate and soul that produces it if it survives at all. The same is true of men everywhere. In Peru, before the Incas, lived a mightier race of men, different. They built their foundations in the earth more firmly, of stones no less huge than those in the Pyramids, without mortar. Yet they stand to this day. After the Incas came Pizzarro with his conquering hosts. And the native Indians, not to be changed or assimilated, receded before the face of all of them. They remain naked savages in the jungles of that country — as there are savages in the heart of Africa who were not captured and sold into civilization in the days of slavery.

We must be changed, born, and born again. Once in so often our corruption must rise and put on incorruption or we perish into what we were in the beginning — no more than the naked prospects of immortal men.

So do we go forward, some part of us forever slipping backward. We veer this way and that, and no man is the captain of his soul. But there is a 'far-off divine event' toward which we move, else by common consent we should cease to strive. Whether we call this the Will of God or not, we must obey it. The scientist and the fundamentalist must lie down together, two old lambs at last, only to rise some morning with a fiercer argument, to strive again toward another change.

But the time has come when these great monuments of races cannot continue; too many people in them; not so many little wars and great plagues to reduce population. Science is making a great economy of human life. The multiple of numbers increases ac-

cordingly; more labor-saving devices being invented, with no scaling down of birth-rates to correspond to the invention of machines that can do the work of from ten to a thousand men. Every natural resource is being exploited, consumed. So competition for 'a place in the sun' grows desperate, and immigration becomes a peril. Yet some kind of static condition begins if so much as three generations remain in the same part of an already highly civilized country, without a change of breed, the crossing of strains, whereby the mind and body are freshened, not only by new blood, but by new ideas.

In this vast country our best interests are served by migration instead of immigration. If not another foreigner lands upon these shores, we shall need a hundred years to assimilate those whom we have already received.

In the last seventy-five years the East has made the Far West. The North and the South have made the Far West. They have brought that section up to higher standards of civilization in many particulars than the older sections are now from which they migrated. The explanation is not only did they become pioneers again by this change of scenes, climate, and terrific opportunities, but they had already been orientated in this country. They had the 'mettle of our pasture' in their blood. They spoke our language. They could think from the start as Americans with the same verve and audacity. The one grief and regret California suffers is in the Orientals she imported.

The Civil War saved the South from inertia. The greed of the North and East saved it from the foreign immigrants and the consequent mental and moral de-

generation the presence of this flotsam and jetsam of the Old World entailed. It is now the freshest, cleanest part of this nation, and offers such opportunities as cannot be found elsewhere. Nearly sixty per cent of the cotton factories, formerly located in New England and other parts of the North, have trekked with their capital to the South, not to mention other thousands of manufacturing plants coming to take advantage of our better labor conditions, our better climate, and better soil. We are developing an energy and shrewdness of judgment, not particularly grateful to a woman such as I am, who was brought up more peacefully and leisurely in the shining, hallowed older South. Still, it proves my point about migration instead of immigration.

Meanwhile, after the momentary shock of seeing our beloved negroes migrating North, we now see the hand of Providence in that business and we are ready to facilitate their passage across the Red Sea of that poor old Mason and Dixon line. We have no such regrets as Pharaoh showed when he saw his Israelites following Moses into that great wilderness. Let somebody else play Moses to these 'wards of the nation,' so tenderly named by their defenders. I hope I live to see the North thickly populated with Yankee negroes! We are glad to exchange them for Yankee whites who invariably become more fiercely Southern than we are ourselves. The only anxiety I have is lest we may experience some trouble in divorcing them from that illusion about how to obtain 'high standards of living.' This is a slogan imposed by radicals whose idealism inspires them to demand what other people earn. They put it across on the sentimental altruism of the East,

but it will not go down here. We have long maintained, in our poverty, the highest standards of living in this country, and we know that high wages do not tend in that direction, but toward the fallacy of 'flivvers' and shiftless extravagance. A high standard of living can only be maintained upon a moral decency and righteousness, with or without money.

But let that go. I only set out to prove my point that we can produce our own immigrants and therefore should not spend the land or resources of our own posterity upon the pale parasites of other nations. The trouble I see ahead right now is the growing ambition of so many people to become Southerners. Throughout the whole of my Happy Pilgrimage across this continent last year, I did not see, meet, or hear of a single man or woman who was not known as a 'Southerner' even if he had come, from the northeast corner of New England, into the bottom of the farthest West after his seventieth year. In spite of our notorious faults and limitations, there must be something entrancing about this warm bright surname of our natures, or so many people from colder cultured, richer regions would not be so glad to adopt it.

In San Francisco I was not able to go to church and sit through a service without sinking into a cold perspiration, not of piety, but of physical exhaustion. And I made the most of this circumstance.

I might have known what I should find, for now, more than ever before in their history, men are earnest and curious about the mysteries of the soul, immortal life and the Great Invisible. Still, the vocative strains of the Far West had not impressed me as being spirit-

ual in the strictly religious sense. Therefore, I was amazed to find their churches crowded to the very doors at every service, with quiet, earnest, intelligent men and women. I suppose the temples of their various 'cults' were also crowded, but what I mean is that now, as always, men and women seek to know God.

The difference was in the character of the preaching; far more intelligent than I have been accustomed to hear, but not so spiritual. It was, I should say, a sort of back-firing of the mortal mind toward Christianity, an effort to make the Gospel plausible to rationalists. To me it seemed a less excusable cowardice than if a Democrat tried to make his political creed subservient to the Republican Party. You cannot make a Republican happy except by becoming one. And you cannot please a rationalist without becoming as limited as he is in the exercise of his spiritual faculties. Though one rose from the dead, he would not believe in eternal life, because he lacks the courage and imagination to drop the little speedometer of his own mind, to be born again with a better mind and a nobler sense of life. He is the spiritual runt who is now exercising too much influence upon the pulpit.

My church-going opportunities were limited in this brief period, but during the last six weeks in the West I heard a number of sermons, only one of which impressed me as being literally and fearlessly inspired by the Word. This was one Sunday morning in one of the fashionable churches in San Francisco. The rector's name, as I remember, was Deems. His sermon was a simple message of the love and will of God, recited with tenderness and awe. Later I was told that he had acquired this manner of preaching during many years

when he had charge of a mission for sailors close to the wharves of San Francisco Bay. Certainly he had been down among men, and knew how far and how near we all are to God.

The religious services which seem to me most typical of this new world are held in the First Congregational Church of San Francisco, which is rightly called 'the Church of all Nations.' Certainly people of every race are to be seen there, whites, blacks, Indians, Mongolians, Malays, Arabs, Jews, and Turks — no doubt Brahmans and Buddhists besides Catholics and other Christians of every denomination. They might all have attended without offense to their conscience.

The pastor is Dr. James Gordon, one-time pastor of a church in Washington City, where, as he related, he preached a funeral sermon on President Roosevelt. One of the preparations he made for his discourse was to attempt the transmigration of casting himself into the character and consciousness of that great man. Some faint trace of that miracle remains discernible in him; not in his appearance but in his manner and power of presence. He is popular in San Francisco and even his enemies give him a good name. I heard one of them tell this story of him which it is said he has never mentioned: When the Great War began he was already an old man, but he went to France with the other American soldiers. During the influenza epidemic he found himself that first winter in an old barn filled with men desperately ill with this malady, he the only man on his feet. Without assistance he nursed them, consoled them, and buried those who died. He came out of there at the end of the two weeks no less haggard and worn than the regiment he saved. In

short, he is a brave gentleman and a good fighting man.

The first Sunday I heard him he delivered a brilliant and convincing essay in favor of Evolution, which was a much-discussed question in this country last summer. He had a vast audience, which was not a congregation, attentive, but not worshipful. The next Sabbath day he preached an equally eloquent and brilliant essay against Evolution! Take your choice was the offer he made to his people. In one address he wound God up in a ball and made Him innocent and ineffective in the whole business; in the other he literally took the lid off of Providence and made Him frightfully responsible for the best and the worst of the whole business. But I cannot remember whether our Heavenly Father was in favor of Evolution but ineffective, or whether He was totally against it and responsible for the whole tragedy of man, according to Dr. Gordon. My impression was that he presented two distinct Gods to his audience on these occasions and was sufficiently fearless of both to leave every man to choose the one his nature, meanness or goodness, preferred. A rationalist could not have shown more liberality of opinion, though he would have indicated more prejudice.

I do not know how to tell it, but as I sat listening to this curiously illuminating student of human nature offer God to be dressed in whatever attributes the individual man in the congregation preferred, a feeling of loneliness came over me. I was homesick, not for the old cabin in the Valley, not for the people I had known and loved, not for the Almighty in general, Who hath created all things, but for the God Lundy and I used to know in the old circuit rider days, to whom we

prayed and in whom we believed as children believe in their father. I missed the sense of Jesus Christ in this great church, that tender companion of all souls, the elder brother of my immortality. I missed the way I used to feel in trouble when I had only to remember such words as these, 'And, lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.' Now it seemed to me I was absolutely alone in this great concourse of people, no inner voice to speak to me, as if I had lost the very angels of my thoughts.

I do not like the implication of that phrase, 'the consolations of the righteous'; it sounds presumptuous to me; but now I craved these consolations, on account of being so bereaved of my own dearer, steadfast God in this church. It was like being an alien in a foreign world. This was probably a grave injustice to that great preacher who was far from intending to deprive anybody of his God. That was my trouble; he was too gallantly free with his accommodating interpretations of what the Lord might or might not be — and me, sitting there so far gone in my years that I needed only to know the One I had always believed in, could not be changed by any changing mind of the times! I had lost my nominative case and was now pathetically in the objective case, all grammar to the contrary notwithstanding!

I spent one more day very secretly in San Francisco, looking for that golden chain. It seemed to me the kind of city that might contain such a chain. I came late in the afternoon to a certain shop, dingy and old, very small and dusty inside, on an obscure street, with lovely strange things dangling in the windows.

I went in — all shadows and silence with glints of brasses and gold in this obscurity: apparently nobody present. Yet I felt eyes upon me, and found them at last, black and glowing, hidden deep beneath the brows of a man sitting like another shadow in the darkest corner. He came forward behind the little glass-topped counter, and I perceived that he was no more than the hot rib of a man, very thin, exotic, but so old that his nationality had faded out of him. Nothing alive now but his brilliant black eyes beneath wrinkled lids.

I explained what I wanted, a golden chain. I described the chain, made of tiny golden blossoms, wide open, the petals dented and turned cunningly by hand, knit together also by hand by delicate loops of gold. The centers dark brown, cankered, not a noticeable chain but sweet, as if the man who made it had blossoms in his mind, and so on and so forth, gathering much elegance and artistry of words as I proceeded. He seemed to grow hotter as he listened; the skeleton of his face reddened as if I had been a forge to him.

'There is no such chain,' he interrupted.

'But I have seen one,' I insisted.

'No!' wagging his head. 'I know what men can do; no man could make such a chain.'

'Not even Cellini?' I asked.

'Cellini! That fellow!' he snorted, meaning that he was tired of having such a person, dead and gone, cast into his teeth. He did not believe half he heard about him, he said in so many words, which can well be true if he has ever read what Cellini says about himself.

I went out wondering if I had illuminated an ordinary chain by some freak of my own craving imagination, which really did not exist as I remembered it.

I left San Francisco the next day for Santa Rosa.

My recollections of the month spent in this lovely town are all so intimate and friendly that they keep like roses in the heart, but they might not make interesting copy for the general reader. Long, warm days spent in the open. Wide meadows illustrated with hoary oaks, swinging beards of gray moss from their green boughs. A glimpse far up the side of Saint Helena Mountain of a tumbledown cabin, one of the many in California, where Robert Louis Stevenson is *said* to have written 'Treasure Island.' A drive through the 'Valley of the Moon,' that low-lying farmhouse bowered in trees where Jack London lived when we had that hot correspondence about the review I wrote of a certain novel he had written. Alas, for the roaring London of those days! He was nearly the first red-blooded biologist we had in American fiction. With what fierce fangs he tore romance and sentiment, left us nothing but our sex to go on. How tame he reads now in comparison with the primitives! No man was ever more romantic in the impression he left of himself upon the startled imagination of his readers. He was really short of stature, frail and pale with tired eyes and a twitching face. Yet he played with the courage of true genius the part of a tall, mad young John the Baptist, clad in a ragged skin, coming up out of the hot, hollow places of this torrid West, 'with the sun in his eyes and offal on his lips,' to proclaim a new sign of the Zodiac in American fiction. A fierce soul with a barbarian's creed of life. Well, God rest him, just the same, and teach him, now stripped of that frail garment of flesh he wore, the Science of the Great Reality.

Late one afternoon, as I was returning with the Shaws from a drive, we saw a very small, active old man step briskly across the road from his house and enter a great garden of flaming loveliness. This was Luther Burbank. As it happened, Dr. Shaw was his physician. This was how I came first to meet that great man. Standing in the velvet twilight of a California evening, the thing that impressed me most was the beautiful symmetry of his face and its effulgence, lifted softly from within with that rare good will of wisdom. Presently he hurried back into the house and returned with two steaming hot figs, a part of his own modest evening meal, which were sweet and delicious. This merry, touchingly simple hospitality was characteristic of the man. Later one morning, passing by, we found him fussing among his lilies. He joined us and we spent a Paradise morning on his farm at Sebastopol. So many miracles there of fruit and blooms. One long traveling monologue of entrancing knowledge, made simple by the wisdom of a great mind as we walked back and forth among his wonders. I cannot claim that much of it was addressed to me. It was the peaceful sunlight of his spirit let out in words over this vast budding and blooming family of his heart. Then again at a small dinner-party given by a very ancient Japanese gentleman, called in those parts the Robinson Crusoe of Japan because he has spent fifty years there making a vineyard that produces wine which rivals the rarest vintages of the Old World. On all of these occasions Burbank showed that fine soft luster of his spirit without the least consciousness of himself, disposed rather to the smiling silence of good will, inspiring others to talk other than nature made them to

speak, as an old rose will bloom again in the freshened air of kind warm weather.

The next time I start off on a happy pilgrimage a part of my preparations shall be the composition of a brief speech, denoting some dignity of mind and character, such as distinguished people are supposed to have, but elastically worded so that it may be used upon various occasions to express appreciation, admiration, faith in the land and the people whom I happen to be visiting at the time — somewhat like that funeral discourse my dear Lundy once prepared in advance at the request of a good woman of his church when she supposed her son to be dying. As a matter of fact he did not die, and one night at a pinch Lundy used the thing for a prayer-meeting talk with almost too much effect upon that faithful group who could not understand why their emotions were so stirred.

Last year I left upon my travels without a copy of any of my books, without a photograph, without a single letter of introduction to a person nearer than Australia, and without so much as a formal sentence in my mind for public delivery. Afterwards it turned out that I was frequently in need of a few elegant sentences. This was a risk I should never have taken, being too extempore by nature; that is to say, ardent and natural, lacking the manner and dignity of a 'worthwhile' person.

Thus the women of Santa Rosa participated in some kind of local Jubilee about the time I arrived there which I was not able to attend. After the celebration, however, came one of them bearing an armful of the most brilliant flowers I have ever seen, by way of welcoming me to their fair city. What I should have

done was to receive the offering with some graceful, well-chosen phrases indicating proudly restrained pleasure and my own importance, after giving that dear woman a chance to make her own speech of welcome, which is no doubt bottled up in her to this day. For what I actually did before she got beyond the introductory sentence was to seize the flowers in one arm and embrace her with the other and kiss her fervently. This was literally our first meeting on earth, but the first thing I shall remember if we meet in Paradise will be the startled and utterly quenched expression she wore on her mortal face that day as she backed gaspingly through the door and took her departure.

What I think now is, if the world thinks you are somebody, act up to their illusions even if you know you are no more of a body than other people, and thus avoid disappointing them in their purely romantic ideals.

I missed seeing the great redwood trees in Northern California and was obliged to content myself with a visit to the Armstrong Forest near Santa Rosa and a view of 'Parson John' there among his noble brethren. But the Parson was only sixty feet in diameter at the base, relatively speaking, a small, stunted redwood, they told me. Dr. Elizabeth Yates took me on this excursion. She is a practicing physician past seventy years of age, active, graceful, and young, who cheerfully takes the road at the rate of sixty miles an hour. A few months after I came back to the Valley, she dropped in to spend the week-end, no more fagged than a youth after the swing she had just made around this North American continent. Those people in California! They retain the hearts of children for life and its experiences.

I had a heavenly long day's drive late in September with the Picketts from Santa Rosa to Berkeley, where I spent several days and where the very 'wow' of my social experiences in California began. It ended a week later in Los Angeles at a 'Southern dinner' which we of the real South would have worked up as a 'Southern barbecue' out of doors, since there were five hundred guests entertained that evening at the Verbeck residence — served in courses, mind you, with plenty of room for everybody to tramp around afterwards without crowding! The guests were all distinguished men and women in one of the arts, and if they were all real Southerners we now know why we are backward in the fine arts in this section. Our geniuses have gone West!

On the third day of October I left Los Angeles for Georgia, having been warned that I could neither risk a sea voyage nor the loftier altitudes in the mountainous regions of the Northwest. I was not homesick, but I began to weary for my old habits, interests, and anxieties. I wanted to go home and worry about the weather, get up at night and look out to see if the stars were shining or if a cloud was gathering, close a window, or open one according to my weather prescience. A hundred dear anxieties began to crowd my mind like orphans crying for care and attention before the winter closed down hard and white over my Valley.

I am not parsimonious. I am no homing bee of a traveler anxious to return with my thighs caked with honey (thank heaven, I am now a red-blooded author, having worked in that awful word, simply as a bee's, however!), but as I settled down for this long homeward

flight it was natural that I should spend some thought in calculating my experiences as a pilgrim. What had I gained? — rest, refreshment, companionships, a closer walk with the men and women of my times — all that, but what wisdom of life that I did not have before? A good deal, but without one single conviction changed. I was going back to my narrow green grave of quietness among the North Georgia hills the same old person I was before I started on this adventure. Not a fault, dear hearts. If memories could be changed by modern facts, what would become of our background, our histories and traditions? If old people wear young people's clothes, ape their minds and manners, are they not ridiculous? The new world through which I had traveled seemed too far removed to worry about. Other men and another order of minds have inherited it. Let them have it, was the way I felt, lying back lazily and peacefully, watching the desert fly past through the windows of that train, cactus, sage, and sand, no longer impressed by this thirsty vastness. I had seen it before. But when I had been going through it on my way West early in the spring, I still owned some kind of equity in this dead, dusty miracle of heat and silence, as all the living must feel that all the earth is their inheritance. Now I had lost that feeling. I was only an ancestor. My mind belonged to the past. My faith, the very principles by which I had lived, belonged to the archives of human recollections, the stuff out of which moderns are now writing 'The Great American Tragedy' and 'The Romance of the Late Christian Era.' What I have to say is that if it is really a 'Great Tragedy,' it cannot be merely an American tragedy, because such are uni-

versal in their significance. And the 'Late Christian Era' was at least Christian. But let that go. What I am telling you is that I felt like a good kind old ghost, laid at last, relieved of every moral responsibility to this new world which did not belong to me.

Still, such ghosts can think, I know by experience. And they retain a quiet power of observation not to be confused by every wind that blows.

I made up my mind about the women of these times. They are after something, but they will not get it, because they do not clearly know what they need, only rather too excitedly what they want. They want what men have got; not the same opportunities, but the same wisdom and licences in living. I saw this in a book — a good saying, not so cynical as it sounds: 'He is a fool who helps to make a woman wise.' That is what the men of this new world are doing to their women, giving them access to too much of the wrong kind of wisdom. Formerly they had a finer regard for them than that.

I think women are losing their private minds (which is something men never lose). They have more and more the disposition to think, speak, and act in public. This is dissolution, not of morals, but of entity. They tattle themselves out telling nothing. Not the least thought or emotion remains hidden or unsaid. They expose their very instincts, which is the most perfectly nude nakedness in this world and never before admitted among the fine arts of living.

I cannot see that their records in public life justify their assurance. They may have done many creditable things. So have millions of women for ages without the bugling public to inspire them. Give them a

chance in a big place with great opportunities and they prove to be mediocre as compared with men. Take the latest example of Governor Ferguson of Texas. A good woman, but a flash in the pan as Governor of that great State; said to have been under the influence of her husband. They all have been controlled in their public manifestations either by their submission or antagonism to men. And one is as bad as the other. It is said with some show of authority that a woman can sometimes make a man great, but there lives not a man in the world who can make a great woman. His influence is too potent. It is bound to rock her boat. Not one woman is this new world can compare with Catherine of Russia in courage, intelligence, or ability. Catherine lived in a licentious age and was herself licentious. She was without the education or training our public-spirited women have so fulsomely received. Don't tell me that immorality and ignorance fit a woman better for public life than the advantages this new world affords! The difference was in the quality of the woman. Catherine had ability and she made her own public to please her. She governed a great and savage nation brilliantly. She made her own elbow-room. She founded the first orphans' asylum in Russia, the first finishing school for women. More than a hundred years before we wiped out yellow fever in Cuba by clearing it of the germs that make that disease, Catherine stopped a scourge of smallpox in Moscow that was near to destroying the population of that city, and she did it without any knowledge of science beyond common sense with the sword and a cleaning squad. She was a bad woman, but a great one. Show me another one now living, good or bad, who is

capable of her achievements. Heaven knows they have far greater opportunities. The trouble is that the last one of them is thumb-marked mentally by the minds of men.

And what of the men in this new world? Not changed at all, except in their relation to woman. More powerful there, and far more indifferent to them. Look at what they are doing that men have never had the brains or power to achieve before. I have to hand it to them. They are supremely intelligent at last. I suppose they are as capable as they ever were of heroic deeds, sacrifices, and splendid achievements. But I missed in them that noble sense of themselves the men of an elder generation did have. Were their forefathers hypocrites, vain boasters, because they made more of heroism than these young ones? I do not think so. I think they lack some quality of spirit which their fathers had. I think the scenes of heroism have changed. It is to be found in doubtful intellectual ventures where there is no danger to incur: in the sporting world where the other fellows play the game; in the commercial world where wealth is the tawdry heroes' crown; on the screen where great deeds, great sacrifices, and courage are merely imitated. These circumstances make an amazing difference in the character of men and the sense they have of themselves. Thousands who are really doing the advance work of civilization are never heard of, rarely praised.

Yes, yes, I said to myself, but you must have found something to honor in this new world. I did, one great thing. There is less deceit in it than ever before. And to be without deceit is to invite virtue, every virtue.

There is astonishing deviltry in its frankness, but also truth, that master key to great consequences. Give them time, oh, give them time, my dears, and they will pass out of this Tristram Shandy stage of showing themselves bottom upwards in these childish antics of the carnal mind, and we shall have upon this earth the greatest race of men and women ever seen beneath the sun! Meanwhile, as we sped along I took some comfort in the fact that God's affairs seemed to be going forward as usual. I could not perceive that the rationalists had put Him out of countenance in a single thing; day and night as usual; seasons changing as usual; grass still springing as it did on the morning and evening of the third day. All the chances we ever had for peace and happiness spread wide before us as they were before the first man. Nothing wrong with anything but us, and that because He has loaned us a little brain power by which to ascend to Him, misused still. I remembered a silly argument in this connection put up by somebody in the West merely by way of teasing my poor old hag-ridden pieties. He said he could not see how I could believe in the Devil. Since God created all things and is a good God, how could I believe He had made the Devil?

'You who reason so,' I replied, 'forget that he made man. There is the Devil for you and the saint and all there is in the way of consequences!'

We are beginning to understand too much, so that we can no longer believe enough to save our own souls. I feel the horror of that sometimes. Though I have lived by faith, I begin to comprehend; I entertain strange premonitions of sane terrible wisdom. For example, being in the West where there are so many

Orientals has been for me like taking a mental malady from them. I feel what they think they know, which is damnation to my faith. Far worse than rationalism is their dreadful ancientness of life and death. I have a hunch that these little yellow ciphers have discovered to their satisfaction that Eternity is behind us instead of in front of us — appalling thought! I was glad to be getting away from those people, bewitched for so many thousand years by their philosophies.

Home at last on a bright October day! — smoke curling like an old lady's plume out of my cabin windows, winds blowing a tide of autumn boughs high against the evening skies; little flowers blooming, like the last faint line of a long summer song; all familiar things showing like blessings. The old dog knows me, yelping joy as if his dear mistress had risen from the dead; the cat with her tail up, three kittens trailing her with their tails in imitation. Everybody glad to see me! No tears, no ring or robe, no fatted kid, but better than a prodigal's return at that.

Now it is October again — some wind blowing, bright tides of autumn leaves rising against the sky, last flowers blooming.

And I have spent the whole of this year in bed writing these recollections of last year; the happiest year of my life. Yet I am not content. Still I long for the farther ends of that Happy Pilgrimage which I did not reach. Not submissive yet to lie upon my shield. It may be that the soul of me feels the approaching change, like a poor old homing bird, whose wings

tremble for flight. But for me there is no dependence to be placed in such premonitions. I have had them all my life. I would rather hold back now and outdo Moses at this business by traveling all my promised lands.

THE END

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